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EXCLUSIVE

Delta Goodrem

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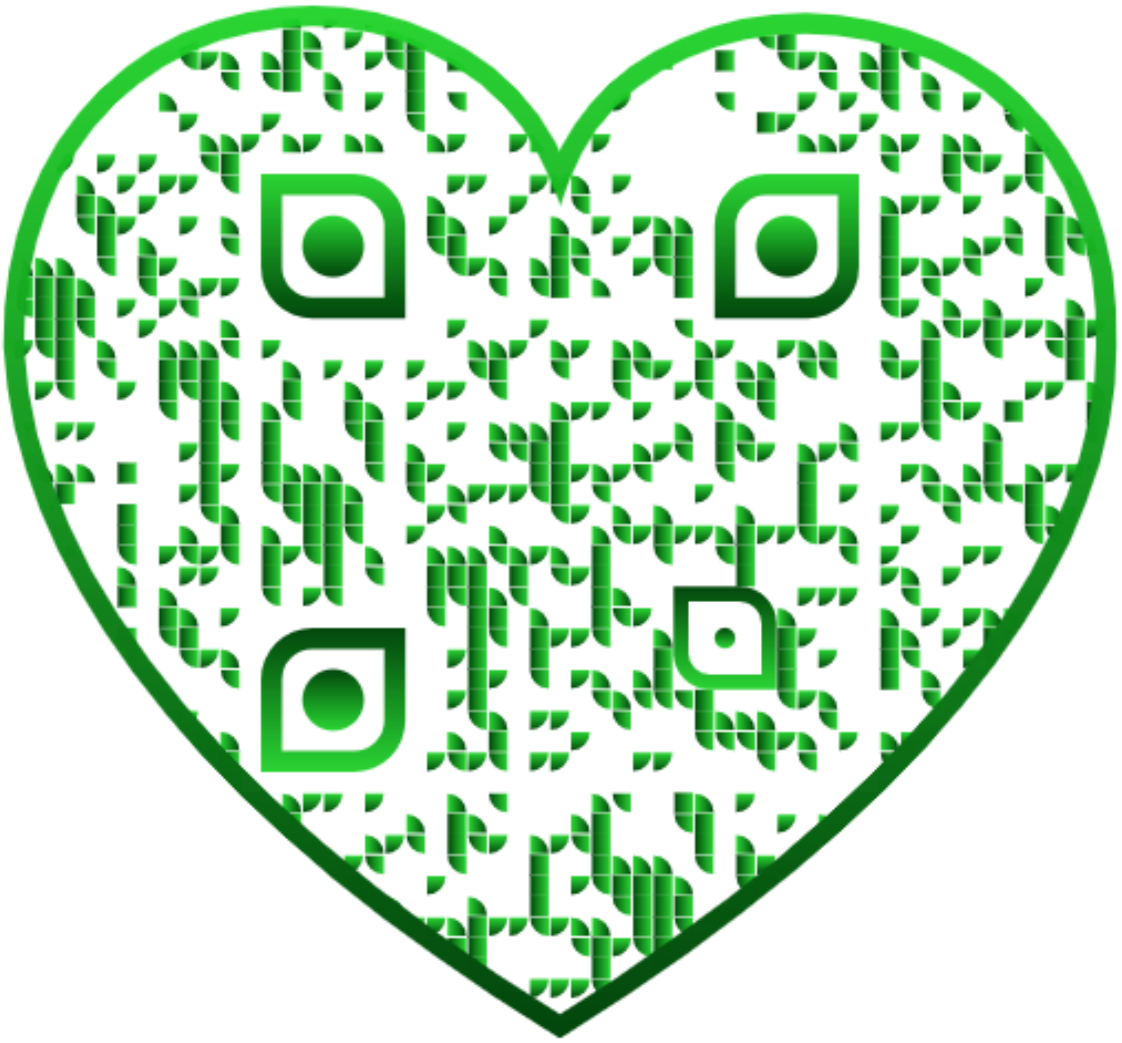

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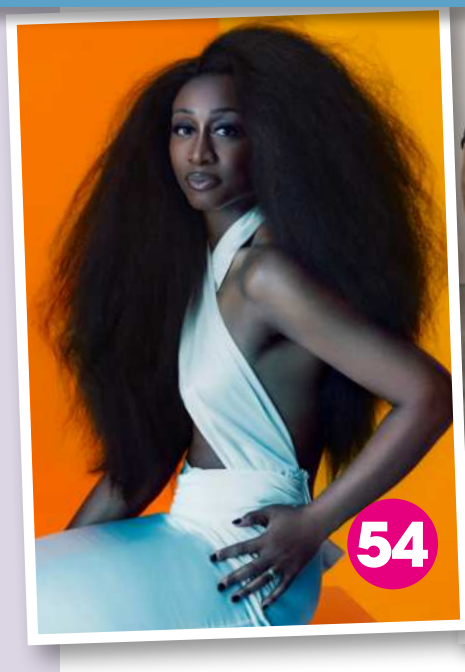

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FLASHBACK

PAUL HARDCASTLE

From the chart-topping *19* to an iconic 'Top Of The Pops' theme, **Paul Hardcastle** takes a whistle-stop trip down memory lane!

Long before he found notoriety as the mastermind behind pop juggernauts like Spice Girls and S Club 7, Simon Fuller was working at Chrysalis Records when he was tempted into the world of management by a rising British star: Paul Hardcastle.

"Simon had just signed the writers of *Like A Virgin* by Madonna and I knocked her off the No. 1 spot," laughs the songwriter, producer and multi-instrumentalist of his 1985 single, *Rain Forest*, and its US Cash Box chart success. "He reached out to me and we got on like a house on fire, so he invited me to the label and asked if I was working on anything new at the time, which I was: *19*."

Released as the first single from his self-titled fourth studio album, the anti-war track is a reflection on the US involvement in the Vietnam War and its effect on the soldiers who served, featuring sampled narration by Peter Thomas, out-of-context interview dialogue and news reports from 'Vietnam Requiem'. Its title refers to the average age of an American combat soldier.

"They must have been thinking, 'Who's going to play this record?', but Simon stayed behind and said, 'This is either going to be a massive flop or something brilliant' - and that's when he offered to leave Chrysalis and manage me."

Although Paul had no idea what a manager did - "His exact words were, 'I suppose I'll just take all the shit for you, really," chuckles the musician - he accepted and soon thereafter the track started climbing the charts.

It was then that Simon had an early stroke of genius; in releasing the single to coincide with the 10th anniversary of the end of the Vietnam War, Paul became hot property and his single a mainstay in the media at the time. "I was on national news and they were saying it would be a big hit, then it went in at four and stayed at No. 1 for five weeks!"

The run would have been cut short had Duran Duran had their way with the James Bond theme, *A View To Kill*, but Paul quickly returned to the studio and set about remixing the track. "I put out the Destruction mix, which was quite different, and it kept Duran Duran off for another two weeks, which was funny because they were the biggest band in the world and on every single pop show," he remembers. "But it was fast and the label had to get the manufacturers to work all weekend, because I handed in the remix tape on Thursday and it was being distributed on Monday!"

A third version, dubbed *The Final Story*, helped Paul secure a fifth week at the top, before the Bradford City stadium fire charity record, *You'll Never Walk Alone*, overtook the position. "I'm happy to say that I vacated the top spot to The Crowd," he smiles, "but in Holland it stayed there for 16 weeks, which made following it up difficult because everyone at the label said I should do something different, which did my head in. So in the end, I took some breathing space and put out *Don't Waste My Time* (another Top 10 hit), which bridged the gap."

It was while promoting that single on 'Top Of The Pops' that he was approached by producer Michael Hurll with a proposition: "He said, 'How would you feel about writing a new theme for 'Top Of The Pops'?', so I wrote *The Wizard* in two days - did an all-nighter on it with my Synclavier, which I'd just bought for the cost of a house - got it to him and he liked it!"

At a time when soap stars like Anita Dobson and Nick Berry were having a crack at pop, Radio 1 initially refused to play the track, but after being beamed into millions of UK households it crashed into the Top 20 and gave Paul another hit, opening up a world of possibilities for the future, which saw him sign with Motown for a jazz LP with Jaki Graham (as Kiss The Sky) and experiment with styles across more than 37 albums.

How does he feel, decades later, revisiting his breakthrough success? "I actually love it," Paul beams. "I love going back and remembering all these things for a reason, because I'm writing a book at the moment with Paul Zanon and it's been funny reliving all the old memories - bloody hell!" **RP**

● ***'Paul Hardcastle – Nineteen And Beyond: 1984-1988' is out now on Chrysalis.***

WORDS CONNOR GOTTO **PHOTO** MIKE PRIOR

RETROPOP

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HEY THERE!

What a treat to introduce a new era from the brilliant Delta Goodrem with this month's exclusive cover feature!

I've had her new single, *Back To Your Heart*, on repeat since first listen and 20 years to the day since the UK release of her debut album, 'Innocent Eyes', I caught up with the Aussie superstar in West London a few weeks back to chat all about new music and her first-ever UK headline tour.

There was laughter and tears in equal measure, as Delta reflected upon the milestone anniversary of her cancer diagnosis while celebrating living in the here and now and diving head-first into a new era that promises to be her best yet!

This month's issue also sees the return of Deacon Blue, with Ricky and Lorraine sitting down to look back over 35+ years of hits, while Beverley Knight discusses turning 50 with a new album and tour, and Steps star Claire Richards tells all about her latest solo record. We also hear from Fun Boy Three, as Lynval and Neville pay tribute to the late Terry Hall with a box set of their complete work.

I'm thrilled to introduce some new regular features to **RETROPOP** this month, starting with our Madonna 40th anniversary column, Inside The Groove; a collaboration with the hit podcast of the same name, which will dive deep into the Queen of Pop's immaculate catalogue each issue. Meanwhile, this month's edition of Flashback (opposite) sees Paul Hardcastle revisit his chart-topping *19*, while songwriter and producer Jeff Vincent appears in In The Mix and Soft Cell's Dave Ball helms this issue's Track By Track with a commentary on the duo's new album, '*Happiness Now Completed'.

There's plenty more inside that I hope you love - this might just be my favourite issue yet (I'm sure I say that every month...). Enjoy, give us a follow on social media to keep up with all the latest goings on, and I'll see you again in a few weeks' time...

Connor

Connor Gotto, Editor
@MrConnorGotto

SAVE UP TO 25% IN OUR SUMMER SALE

RETROPOP PLAYLIST

The latest releases from your favourite **RETROPOP** artists - all in one place!

WILL.I.AM & BRITNEY SPEARS - *Mind Your Business* (Epic)
The pop princess reunited with her 'Britney Jean' collaborator on the sequel to their hit single, *Scream & Shout*, leaning into similar electronic territory while making an equally bold statement.

ANASTACIA - *Supergirl* (Edel)
The second release from her covers album was originally released as the debut track from German band Reamonn and displays her distinctive vocals over synths and Spanish guitar.

BANANARAMA - *Cruel Summer (3AM Mix)* (In Synk)
One of the greatest songs to come out of the '80s turns 40 with a lush reworking of the classic track courtesy of Ian Masterson, with new vocals from Sara Dallin and Keren Woodward.

JESSIE WARE X RÓISÍN MURPHY - *Freak Me Now* (EMI)
This standout from Jessie's superb fifth album has been a mainstay on our playlist since its release - and now it's back thanks to a genius collaboration with the electro-pop legend.

PETER WILSON - *If I Could Love That Way* (Energise)
Lifted from his latest EP, the Aussie star injects his passion for PWL and the pop classics of Stock Aitken Waterman into a track over pouring with late-'80s nostalgia.

ROISIN MURPHY X DJ KOZE - *You Knew* (Ninja Tune)
A brand new banger from her much-anticipated LP, 'Hit Parade', the Irish star continues to conjure a strange new sonic universe that's unravelling with each instalment of her upcoming release.

CHRISTINE MCVIE - *Little Darlin'* (Rhino)
On what would have been her 80th birthday, this groovy unreleased gem from her 2004 solo album was released ahead of a set of reissues from her catalogue later this year.

HAZELL DEAN - *100% Pure Love* (SP Music)
Disco excellence from the Hi-NRG star on her latest single, once again produced with her long-time production partner, Pete Ware, from her forthcoming first album in eight years.

TROYE SIVAN - *Rush* (EMI Australia)
Named after the poppers brand and celebrating a return to the dance floor, the club-friendly track is a far cry from Troye's laid-back synth-pop of the past - and we're here for it!

CORINNE BAILEY RAE - *New York Transit Queen* (Thirty Tigers)
Inspired by an archival photo of Audrey Smaltz, the winner of Miss New York Transit pageant, with gritty guitars and punchy drums, the lead track from Corinne's fourth album is a taste of what's to come.

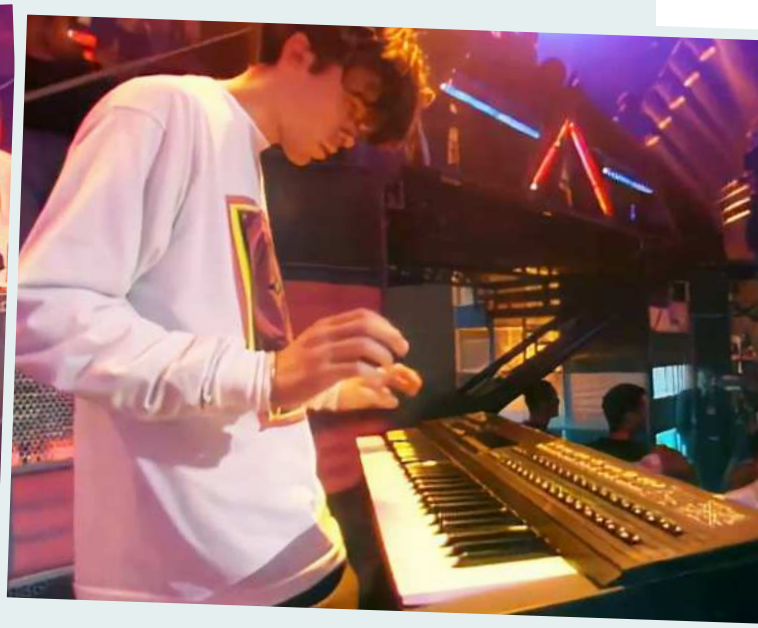
PHOTOS EDEL; EPIC; JACK ALEXANDER

HOW TO LISTEN

Scan the QR code and check out all the **RETROPOP** *playlists in one place, over on Spotify!*

Top Of The Pops *tales*

Step back in time as we revisit classic moments from the 'Top of the Pops' archives!



#16 PRIMAL SCREAM GET LOADED

March 15, 1990: Primal Scream – *Loaded*

Appearing on 'Top Of The Pops' had been a long-time dream of Primal Scream singer Bobby Gillespie.

"We were into T-Rex and Bowie and Gary Glitter before punk and we used to watch 'Top Of The Pops', so it was a real ambition to be on it," he told the Daily Record in 2011. But when the invite came through for *Loaded*, it inspired slightly mixed feelings...

The indie-dance hit evolved from *I'm Losing More than I'll Ever Have*, a song on the group's second album. Having passed through the hands of remixer/producer Andrew Weatherall, it bore quite a distant relation to the original, with only nine seconds of vocals for Gillespie to deliver. This left the frontman, swathed in tight black leather, with little to do but some knock-kneed swaying slightly suggestive of a need for the toilet, plus a little light percussion.

"It was like, 'Fucking hell, I've waited all my life for this and I'm on 'Top Of The Pops' playing maracas,'" he told Record Collector in 2018. "But then I thought, 'You've just got to go with it, as there is going to be more.'"

The band took what could be called a method approach. "We figured if the song was titled *Loaded* then we had to *be* loaded, even if it was a mime. We were artists and we took this performance very seriously..." Gillespie wrote in his autobiography, 'Tenement Kid'. "We started early with the powders and booze, so by the time of the final filming we were all on a concoction of ecstasy, speed, cocaine and whatever else there was knocking about."

The performance also marked the first 'TOTP' appearance of another group... Well, sort of. Standing in for Scream keyboardist Martin Duffy was Mark Gardener, floppy-fringed frontman of Creation Records labelmates Ride, drunkenly plonking away at an unplugged Yamaha DX7. "I'm not a natural keyboard player," he later tweeted. The Oxford shoegazers debuted in their own right a year later.

They can probably recall it better than Gillespie, whose clearest memory of the whole affair is a sobering moment at the end of the night. "I was so fucking high... I remember running through the labyrinthine BBC corridors trying to find a way out of the dystopian maze of TV Centre and running straight into a huge glass door. I didn't see it until it was too late. The Inspiral Carpets were standing on the other side." Just say no, kids. **RP**

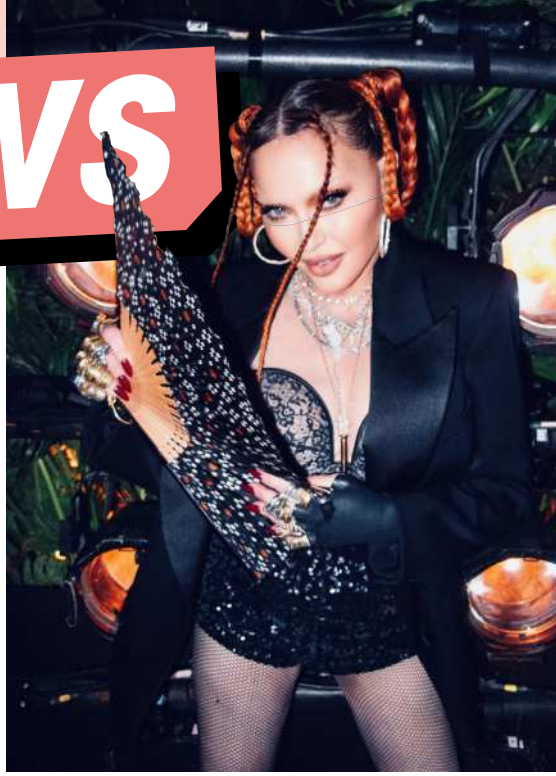
● ***Follow @TOTPFacts on Twitter for live trivia commentary on the BBC Four repeats.***

TOP 10
THE OFFICIAL CHART FOR MARCH 11, 1990

1. BEATS INTERNATIONAL – *Dub Be Good to Me*
2. VARIOUS ARTISTS – *The Brits 1990 (Dance Medley)*
3. MICHAEL BOLTON – *How am I Supposed to Live Without You*
4. JIVE BUNNY AND THE MASTERMIXERS – *That Sounds Good to Me*
5. GURU JOSH – *Infinity (1990's Time for the Guru)*
6. THE B-52'S – *Love Shack*
7. JT AND THE BIG FAMILY – *Moments in Soul*
8. ERASURE – *Blue Savannah*
9. SINEAD O'CONNOR – *Nothing Compares 2 U*
10. DAVID A STEWART FEATURING CANDY DULFER – *Lily Was Here*

WORDS IAN BERRIMAN **PHOTOS** BBC / TOP OF THE POPS

LINE-UP NEWS



MADONNA HITS PAUSE ON CELEBRATION TOUR

Madonna has axed the opening North American leg of her 'Celebration Tour' after suffering a health setback that left her in the ICU over the weekend.

The Queen of Pop updated fans on her condition in a statement on social media following her hospitalisation for a bacterial infection, thanking followers for their "positive energy, prayers and words of healing and encouragement".

"I have felt your love. I'm on the road to recovery and incredibly grateful for all the blessings in my life," penned the *Live To Tell* singer. "My first thought when I woke up in the hospital was my children. My second thought was that I did not want to disappoint anyone who bought tickets for my tour.

"I also didn't want to let down the people who worked tirelessly with me over the last few months to create my show. I hate to disappoint anyone."

Confirming the tour will now launch in October in Europe, she continued: "My focus now is my health and getting stronger and I assure you, I'll be back with you as soon as I can! The current plan is to reschedule the North American leg of the tour and to begin in October in Europe.

"I couldn't be more grateful for your care and support. Love, M."

The *Ray of Light* singer had been due to kick off the run at the Rogers Arena in Vancouver, BC on July 15, but in a statement shared in June following her setback, her talent manager, Guy Oseary, first hinted that some of the shows had been put on hold.

"On Saturday June 24, Madonna developed a serious bacterial infection which lead to a several day stay in the ICU," he said. "Her health is improving, however she is still under medical care. A full recovery is expected.

"At this time we will need to pause all commitments, which includes the tour. We will share more details with you soon as we have them, including a new start date for the tour and for rescheduled shows."

Check our website for the most up-to-date tour info.

PHOTO RICARDO GOMES

KYLIE SET FOR SAW MUSICAL

Kylie Minogue is set to appear in Stock Aitken Waterman's hotly-anticipated 'I Should Be So Lucky'!

The pop icon will digitally appear throughout the show as a specially-created character unique to the musical when it opens at the Manchester Opera House on November 2.

"It is the music that inspired a generation (plus my first five albums!) so to have all the SAW hits in this original story will make for a compelling, funny and heartfelt show," says the *Step Back In Time* hitmaker. "Let's enjoy the magic all over again!"

'I Should Be So Lucky' - named after Kylie's breakthrough hit - tells the story of Ella and Nathan, a young couple, hopelessly in love and about to take the biggest step of their lives – marriage. However, it doesn't go according to plan and begs the question: Will they be together forever, or will he make her cry and say goodbye?

"Stock Aitken Waterman are thrilled to be part of this wonderful new adventure," add the hitmaking trio. "To see our songs take on a new life in the world of musical theatre and working on a collaboration with Debbie Isitt and her talented team is so exciting and very special."

Written and directed by Debbie and choreographed by Jason Gilkison, the musical stars Lucie-Mae Sumner and Billy Roberts in the lead roles with performances booked across the UK through May 2024.

For full details, visit our website.

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

IN THE LOOP

S CLUB star **HANNAH SPEARRITT** will release her memoir, 'Facing The Music', on October 24

KATE BUSH shared a note to fans after *Running Up That Hill* crossed one billion streams

BEYONCÉ came out on top at the 2023 BET Awards, tying **SZA** with three wins apiece

JESSICA SIMPSON is considering a return to music

Tony Hadley's big band extravaganza

Tony Hadley will hit the road next spring with this 'Big Swing' UK tour.

The former Spandau Ballet frontman is set to perform classics by icons such as Ella Fitzgerald, Tony Bennett, and Frank Sinatra – along with his own hits – as part of the run.

Speaking of the inspiration behind his latest project, the musician says: "My love of swing music began when I was very young. The preparation for Sunday lunch was never without the classic sounds of Sinatra, Bennett and many more...

"Then years later, when we formed our first band at school which eventually would become Spandau Ballet, I was reminded by my parents that although I loved punk rock, if I was serious about pursuing a career as a professional singer, never to forget the classic jazz vocalists.

"So there I was listening to the Sex Pistols and The Clash alongside Tony Bennett and Jack Jones!"

The *Gold* hitmaker will be joined by the Fabulous TH Band alongside a full brass section for the concerts, which will be "totally different" to his previous tours.

He adds: "I've always loved performing live, but this swing tour is totally different from our normal rock shows!

"I want audiences to come and enjoy a night of amazing songs from an incredible era of music alongside some great songs from my own repertoire."

Tickets are on sale now.

PHOTO IZZEDEAN AL-YASSIN

PHOTO RANDEE ST. NICOLAS

IT'S BRITNEY, BITCH!

Britney Spears is set to tell her story in her first-ever memoir, out this autumn.

Due October 24, 'The Woman In Me' is published on Gallery Books, an imprint of Simon & Schuster, and is billed as "the publishing event of the year".

Jennifer Bergstrom, Gallery Books Senior Vice President and Publisher, said in a statement: "Britney's compelling testimony in open court shook the world, changed laws, and showed her inspiring strength and bravery.

"I have no doubt her memoir will have a similar impact — and will be the publishing event of the year. We couldn't be more proud to help her share her story at last."

Arriving following the end of her court-ordered 13-year conservatorship, which was dissolved and finally terminated in November 2021, the title promises to reveal "for the first time her incredible journey [and] strength at the core of one of the greatest performers in pop music history".

According to a press release, the *Toxic* star's much-anticipated tome "illuminates the enduring power of music and love — and the importance of a woman telling her own story, on her own terms."

'The Woman in Me' is "a brave and astonishingly moving story about freedom, fame, motherhood, survival, faith, and hope," the press release continues.

The book is available to pre-order now.

ELTON JOHN was joined by **COLDPLAY** via video link for a surprise tribute during the final show of his 'Farewell Yellow Brick Road' tour

DOLLY PARTON revealed plans to record a gospel album while launching her new LP 'Rockstar' in London

MARTI PELLOW's new book, 'The Lost Chapter', will be accompanied by a mini-album of the same name

JIMMY SOMERVILLE praised **STEPS** for refusing to perform in Dubai due to the country's anti-LGBTQ+ laws

LINE-UP NEWS

DARREN HAYES GETS CANDID

PHOTO JAMES REESE

Darren Hayes will release his first-ever memoir in late 2024.

Penguin Books has acquired rights to publish the book by the singer, songwriter and former Savage Garden frontman, which arrives off the back of his solo comeback with his fifth album, 'Homosexual', after a decade away.

"I've been secretly telling stories about my life, through my music, since the very first Savage Garden single," Hayes said in a statement.

"Back then my innermost thoughts were shrouded in lyrical metaphor and deeply embedded within the visuals and stage costumes of a fantastical pop career. The reality of my life was much more complicated than the constraints of a three-minute radio song would allow.

"Almost 30 years later I feel free for the first time in my life and so grateful to partner with Penguin to truly tell my authentic story."

Alison Urquhart, Non-Fiction Publisher at Penguin, added she was "thrilled to bits" to be working with Hayes on the project.

"Darren and I have a mutual love of '80s pop music and gothic, twisted tales and he is a remarkable and natural storyteller," she added. "I know that he will create something so special and a reflection of who he is both as an extraordinarily gifted artist and a remarkable human being."

Keep an eye on our website for pre-order details.

HAIRCUT 100% LIVE

Haircut One Hundred are reuniting for a massive UK tour this autumn.

Nick Heyward will join the rest of the band for their first run of shows in over 40 years, following a pair of sell-out gigs earlier this year marking the anniversary of their classic debut LP, 'Pelican West'.

'Haircut 100% Live' sees the group play 15 dates throughout October and November, with the frontman sharing in a statement: "40 years since 'Pelican West' went Platinum, and we thought a few people might want to celebrate with us at the Shepherd's Bush Empire... Wow!

What a fantastic night it was back in May this year.

"Our fans are incredible and tickets sold out so fast that our families and friends almost missed the boat, those tickets became gold dust. But we are coming back with a tour to beat all tours this autumn, and we can't wait.

"All the hits that you love and new tracks that we are bursting to share with you. See you all there for the biggest tour that Haircut 100 have ever undertaken."

Tickets are on sale now.

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

IN THE LOOP

ROBBIE WILLIAMS has confirmed new music will feature on the soundtrack to his 'Better Man' biopic

CHER is recording her first-ever Christmas album

According to his girlfriend, **DARIUS** died of an undiagnosed heart condition

DAMON ALBARN is working on a new **GORILLAZ** album

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

ABC GO ORCHESTRAL

ABC will return to the road with a new orchestral tour celebrating their seminal debut album, 'The Lexicon Of Love'.

Martin Fry and co. have joined forces with Southbank Sinfonia and long-time collaborator Anne Dudley for the run of February 2024 shows, which will feature the album played in full alongside hits from their catalogue.

Topping the charts upon its release in 1982, the LP features the Top 20 hit singles *Tears Are Not Enough*, *Poison Arrow*, *The Look Of Love* and *All Of My Heart*.

Opening at the Brighton Dome on February 5, the tour will take in Nottingham, Sheffield, Glasgow, Gateshead, Birmingham, Bath, Liverpool and Manchester, before concluding at The London Palladium on February 17. **Tickets are on sale now.**

More dates for Depeche Mode

PHOTO ANTON CORBIJN

Depeche Mode will bring the 'Memento Mori Tour' back to Europe in 2024.

Following stadium and arena shows across Europe, Mexico, Canada, and the US this summer and autumn, Dave Gahan and Martin Gore will play an additional 29 dates across the continent, extending the tour into 2024.

Beginning January 22 at The O2, London and finishing April 5 after multiple nights at Lanxess Arena in Cologne, Germany, the 22-city tour will also see the duo play several nights at Berlin's Mercedes-Benz Arena, Paris' Accor Arena, Madrid's Wizink Center, Milan's Mediolanum Forum, and more.

The 'Memento Mori' album and tour follows the passing of founding member Andy Fletcher, with Dave sharing of the project: "It's been a really enjoyable process, making this record with Martin, and James Ford, and Marta Salogni.

"We get to make music and we get to play music for you, hopefully bring a sense of joy and togetherness in our own small way, in a world that seems to be constantly in some kind of turmoil.

"It sometimes feels a bit strange to be able to do this, any time, but to be able to walk on a stage and bring some joy to a lot of people, I hope, is something that I think we are pretty proud of." **Tickets are on sale now.**

RICK ASTLEY has extended his 'Are We There Yet?' tour with a string of dates across Ireland and mainland Europe

EAGLES will return to the stage one last time with 'The Long Goodbye' farewell tour, launching in the US this autumn

CARLY RAE JEPSEN has unveiled 'The Loveliest Time' - the counterpart to her latest album, 'The Loneliest Time'

MISSING PERSONS star **DALE BOZZIO** has confirmed a new album is due later this year

As **Madonna** revisits 40 years of success with her global 'Celebration Tour', the hosts of the Inside The Groove podcast explore how she became an icon and the most successful solo female recording artist on the planet!

INSIDE THE GROOVE

● *For more Madonna, listen to Inside The Groove wherever you get your podcasts, and join Edward, Jonathan and Peter to celebrate Madonna's 65th birthday with a Saturday afternoon disco at London's Royal Vauxhall Tavern on August 19.*

MADONNA (AKA MADONNA: THE FIRST ALBUM)

RELEASED: **July 1983**

Madonna's self-titled debut not only outlined her manifesto but created a blueprint for every female popstar to follow. Its eight, lengthy tracks make it clear that the fresh-faced singer was all about the dance floor with a selection of songs that feature compelling rhythms, inescapable melodies and lyrics that speak of heartache, yet always hold its singer as the heroine of her own destiny.

Having signed a two single deal with Sire Records, they decided on an album and paired her with producer Reggie Lucas, himself greedy for success, having had a reasonable hit with Stephanie Mills *Never Knew Love Like This Before*. While working on demos that Madonna had written herself, Reggie contributed two of his own compositions, including *Borderline*, which he wrote specifically for the Detroit-born singer.

The songs had an undeniable sound of New York; a natural progression of disco, but with the cold hard beats of the Linn LM1 drum machine (made famous by Human League for their 'Dare' album), bouncy synth basslines and funky bass guitar, often playing the same melody to give a more organic sound. Throw in rhythm guitar and Fred Zarr's futuristic-sounding keyboards, the demos that emerged in early 1983 were more than promising.

But Madonna was less than happy, feeling that Reggie's production was too rich. She took the multitrack recordings to her then boyfriend, John 'Jellybean' Benitez, who remixed them to sound simpler, fresher and more orientated to the clubs where he performed. One of the tracks, *Ain't No Big Deal* – written by Madonna's former boyfriend, Stephen Bray - didn't make the final cut. Scrambling around for a replacement, it was Jellybean who suggested the song *Holiday*, which had been pitched to him by the band Pure Energy.

Entering the studio to record a facsimile of the original and featuring the brand new Oberheim DMX drum machine on percussive duties, the song would prove to be not only the final piece in the jigsaw, but the hit Madonna needed to conquer the airwaves. Famously performing it on 'Top Of The Pops' in January 1984, it began Madonna's pledge to rule the world – or at least, the charts – in the UK, Australia and eventually the rest of the globe.

At one point, Madonna's debut was titled 'Lucky Star' and artwork was prepared by her friend and roommate, Martin Burgoyne, using a photoshoot from the end of '82 by Edo Burtoglio. But the final photographs, taken by Gary Heery in May 1983, provided an iconic, arresting image that was so enduring that shots were used for her 2022 remix package, 'Finally Enough Love'.

This simple use of Futura on the artwork for her name and the eponymous title gives amazing symmetry and simplicity to the design. Everything hinging off a red 'O' (the only bit of colour to appear on the cover) gives us that playful typographic satisfaction!

Shot in early summer 1984 by Steven Meisel in sepia toned lustre, the lighting has a golden-age-of-Hollywood quality that elevates the images with desire and gloss.

The photos are deliberately provocative and intended to show Madonna as both the Virgin Mary and the whore – a role she was more than happy to inhabit. The design side of the release was by Jeri Heiden, who would go on to work with Madonna until the end of the decade.

LIKE A VIRGIN RELEASED: **November 1984**

Despite its moderate success – or perhaps because of it – Madonna wasn't thrilled with her debut. Later referring to it as "sounding like an aerobics album", she was keen to evolve as an artist and bring a more rounded and pop approach to her music.

The rising star felt sure she could carry off a more varied repertoire and had gained sufficient studio experience to produce the next album herself. Bosses at Sire disagreed but they *did* allow Madonna to choose who she worked with and approved of Nile Rodgers – who enjoyed recent success with David Bowie's 'Let's Dance' and was soon to embark on a lifelong partnership with Duran Duran.

Warner Bros A&R executive Michael Ostin brought her two songs – *Like A Virgin* and *Material Girl* - with Madonna recognising them as finely-crafted tunes and favouring the play on words in both songs, especially as she was no materialist and definitely not a virgin!

The album was recorded at Power Station Studios in New York and included a richer sound with more live instrumentation. Nile's recording schedule conflicted with Madonna's own work ethic; often he would not arrive until late afternoon, which greatly frustrated the singer who attended every part of the recording process, right through to the mixing and mastering.

The LP features a couple of ballads, including a cover of Rose Royce's *Love Don't Live Here Anymore*, but keen for more A-side material she added *Dress You Up*, written by Andrea LaRusso and Peggy Stanziale, to the mix. However, all along she knew *Like A Virgin*, written by Billy Steinberg and Tom Kelly, would be the lead single and title track, with its Motown-style bassline a clear winner. Its writers would go on to huge success with artists like Cyndi Lauper, Whitney Houston and The Bangles.

With the album ready to go by the Summer of 1984, Madonna became frustrated by the ongoing success of singles from her first record, forcing her to sit on the new material for several months. She did, however, debut the title track at the first MTV Video Music Awards in September with a show-stopping and potentially career-ending performance; descending from a giant wedding cake, dressed in a cropped bridal gown, Madonna cavorted in front of the crowd with a highly sexualised performance.

In that moment, everything changed, and she was instantly a global superstar.

WORDS EDWARD RUSSELL, JONATHAN PRYCE & PETER FALLOON **PHOTO** ALBERTO TOLOT

EUROVISION SONG CONTEST

Moves to make

After taking social media by storm with his Eurovision return earlier this year, **Daði Freyr** opens up about his new album and heading back to the biggest stage in music!

Your album is out next month and you've basically done everything on it. What's it been like writing, recording and producing 'I Made An Album'?

I've always worked alone since I started making music and this album was no exception. I worked on it mostly in my home studio, then in the actual studio and even in the car on tour. So it wasn't written over a short period of time; I was working on it for over a year and you can hear that in the lyrics.

This is more like a collection of songs than it is an album with lyrics centred on what I'm doing at the moment. Because I have two kids, I'm travelling for shows, I'm working on the business side of things, so there's a lot of different parts of me on this album.

I wanted this to be a consolidation of what I've been doing for the last seven or eight years, because I've been working towards this sound and I wanted to make an album that's true to that.

Has your way of working changed since Eurovision?

It's been pretty hectic and I've had to really reevaluate how I spend my time. I've had at least two or three burnouts since 2020, which was something that I hadn't experienced before, but when you're in that space you just kind of keep going and you don't say 'no' to things, because it's still new and exciting. But when that faded off a little bit, I had to really decide how I spent my time and now it's a lot more focused; so when I'm working, I'm working and when I'm not, I'm not.

> "I'm realising that I want to do more stuff than I actually can do, so I have to let people do it with me..."

You've released parts of the album in instalments over the past few months. Whose idea was that?

That's all me - I'm really impatient! I'm very used to doing all of the parts myself, which also includes actually releasing the music and uploading it onto the internet, so there wouldn't be a long time between me finishing something and it coming out. Now I'm working with more people, it has to be a little more strategic, but this way was the middle ground.

It took a little while and I'm still learning to let people do stuff; mostly I was fine with hearing ideas, but then I had to do everything. Now I'm realising that I want to do more stuff than I actually can do, so I have to let people do it with me.

You're also pretty well known for *that* iconic jumper. Have you thought about starting a side hustle in knitwear?

No! [Laughs] I do sell it on my website, though - I just don't tell many people about it. There was a time where you could do a custom one; I had a generator where you could make your own pixelated face and do different hairstyles and stuff like that, then you could order it on a sweater. But that was a lot of work and those are the kinds of things that I had to stop because it was just too much for one person...

Earlier this year, you were back on the Eurovision stage as part of the Liverpool Songbook! Tell us about your cover of Atomic Kitten's *Whole Again*.

I had a few songs in mind beforehand

WORDS CONNOR GOTTO
PHOTO STEFANIE SCHMID RINCON

but I hadn't thought of *Whole Again* as a Liverpool song. I did a lot of Googling and I was originally thinking of *Let's Dance to Joy Division* by The Wombats and *You Spin Me Round* by Dead Or Alive, which Netta ended up doing.

I knew I wanted to do something a little niche but that people would know, and it worked so well. So I recorded it, produced it and sent it over to Eurovision, and that was basically it. I like doing covers because they don't take me long. I'll definitely be doing *Whole Again* on the tour! **RP**

● ***'I Made An Album' is out August 25 on AWAL Recordings. His UK + Ireland Tour launches November 24 and plays through December.***

MALMÖ 2024

The 2024 Eurovision Song Contest will take place in Malmö, Sweden!

The city was selected following a bidding process that also saw Gothenburg, Örnsköldsvik and Stockholm show an interest in staging the show.

Swedish broadcaster SVT, together with the European Broadcasting Union (EBU), will organise the Contest thanks to Loreen's historic win in Liverpool earlier this year.

The Grand Final will be staged at the Malmö Arena on Saturday, May 11 with Semi-Finals on Tuesday, May 7 and Thursday, May 9.

Eurovision Song Contest Executive Supervisor, Martin Österdahl, said of the news: "The EBU is thrilled that Malmö has been selected as the Host City for the Eurovision Song Contest 2024. Malmö holds a special place in the history of the Contest, having successfully hosted it firstly in 1992 and then in 2013 – following Loreen's last win.

"We're excited to be returning to this vibrant and dynamic city which has demonstrated it has the venues and infrastructure that are perfect for staging the world's largest live music event.

"Malmö's commitment to diversity, inclusivity, and innovation aligns perfectly with the spirit of the competition. Furthermore, its compact size and well-developed transport infrastructure means everyone involved in the Contest, including delegations, media, and fans will be able to navigate the city easily.

"Its commitment to sustainability and green initiatives also aligns perfectly with our own values, making it an ideal Host City for the 68th Eurovision Song Contest.

"Malmö's bid demonstrated a huge passion for the Eurovision Song Contest, and I have full confidence in their ability to create an unforgettable experience that will bring together fans, artists, and viewers across the globe. Together with Host Broadcaster SVT, we will create an extraordinary celebration of music, unity, and diversity that will captivate the world in May next year."

It will be the city's third time hosting, following 1992 and 2013 editions, and the first time the Eurovision Song Contest hasn't visited a capital city for five consecutive Contests.

Next year's Eurovision marks the seventh time Sweden has hosted, having previously also staged the competition in Stockholm in 1975, 2000 and 2016, in Gothenburg in 1985.

TRACK BY TRACK

SOFT CELL

*HAPPINESS NOW COMPLETED

As **Soft Cell** round out their '*Happiness Not Included' trilogy with a pair of releases, Dave Ball dives deep into '*Happiness Now Completed'!

1 FIRST HAND EXPERIENCE IN SECOND HAND LOVE

Always a favourite of Soft Cell who at the turn of the '80s were massively inspired by Giorgio Moroder. This song is a cover and taken from his trailblazing 'From Here To Eternity' album. A really uplifting track to start the '*Happiness Now Completed' album, and one we nearly recorded 20 years ago during our first reunion.

2 JUKEBOX HEAD

A track that narrowly missed the original album due to lack of space – the backing track was recorded in the kitchen of my old flat during lockdown. The poppiest side of Soft Cell.

3 QUIET REBELLION

Another track also recorded in my kitchen during lockdown. You might hear a little nod towards one of our biggest '80s tracks in there if you listen carefully...

4 STRANGE KINDA DANCE (EDIT)

Lyrically very much about Covid, and was not on the album, as it was feared it would date it, and that people wanted to get away from that era as soon as we came out the other side. Full of synth bleeps and noises, and even a touch of acid!

5 THE DAY THE WORLD TURNED DAY-GLO (FULL VERSION)

An X-Ray Spex cover that came together in a matter of days before the release of *Purple Zone*. I recorded the demo at home. Gary Barnacle who plays with us live, as well as featuring on much of '*Happiness Not Included', added sax remotely in Kent. Marc recorded his vocals at Dean St, London. And Philip Larsen pieced it all together. This was the B-side of *Purple Zone*, and this version is the original take before it was edited down.

6 VAPOURISE (SINGLE VERSION)

Another contender for the original album, this is a shorter version of the full length which features on the *Bruises* CD single. We have been playing this live on the current run of shows and it's been going down really well, with lots of call and response opportunities for Marc and our backing singers!

7 YOU KILL ME

Something you wouldn't normally hear from Soft Cell: I wrote the backing track with the classically-trained Jon Savage (not the journalist!). Marc's lyrics and arrangement, plus the backing vocals, make this song really stand out as one of the best from the album sessions.

8 LAST CHANCE (2022 VERSION)

A re-recording of 'Cruelty Without Beauty''s, in Marc's words, "the single that got away", and now considered to be the definitive version of what has been suggested is the sequel to *Say Hello, Wave Goodbye*. Brass section by Jack Birchwood, who was on stage with

PHOTO ANDREW WHITTON

Soft Cell at The O2 show. We're going to bring this out at Christmas every year from now on!

9 MURDER YOUR DARLINGS

A dark, brooding track which came about when choosing which songs went on the original album, and which got "murdered" and left off. The original album was over 70 minutes long until the record company told us we had to reduce it to 12 tracks. This happens a lot in Soft Cell world!

10 NIGHT AND THE CITY (2023 VERSION)

Originally recorded around the time of The O2 show, another track that almost made the album – this new version has the added benefit of Gary Barnacle playing some crazy flute parts, as well as really letting rip on his trademark sax. Would love to play this live at some point.

11 GEMINI LOUNGE

Another track from my old kitchen in Kennington. This was the bonus track on the *Nostalgia Machine* CD. Again, another little nod to an old hit on here...

12 DEFIANT

From the original album sessions and another favourite – fantastic backing vocals from Bryan Chambers, Simon King and No. 1-selling artist Louise Marshall (*Afraid To Feel* by LF System was the biggest-selling dance single of 2022, spending eight weeks at the top of the UK singles chart).

13 BACK TO NATURE (MARC'S MIX)

Originally recorded as a bonus track for the 'To Show You I've Been There' Soft Cell book in 2019. This is a different version featuring an alternative vocal take by Marc, which he prefers to the first version. A cover of the Fad Gadget classic, Frank Tovey was at Leeds Poly at the same time as us.

14 *HAPPINESS NOT INCLUDED (SAX VERSION)

The original album version did not feature sax, but we thought Gary Barnacle's parts were too good to leave off, and this version was especially created for the Electronic Sound magazine covermount. A longer version appears on the '*Happiness Now Extended' vinyl.

15 PURPLE ZONE (ORIGINAL SOFT CELL VERSION)

The original pre-Pet Shop Boys version that was recorded and delivered before that fateful meeting when Neil and Chris came backstage to see us after the London Hammersmith show, and a remix was suggested. This version is slower, and is an interesting alternative to what became the definitive mix of this song.

16 NOSTALGIA MACHINE (RADIO EDIT)

Special shortened version, which originally got a few plays on Radio 2, but is now making a comeback - watch this space. We've got some great new remixes by Hifi Sean and Wally Funk going to clubs this week. Originally the follow up to *Purple Zone*. The full version is on '*Happiness Now Extended'.

17 BRUISES ON ALL MY ILLUSIONS (RADIO EDIT)

The first single release from '*Happiness Not Included'. This slightly more uptempo version was created for radio, who promptly chose not to playlist it! Apparently not happy enough, when coming out of Covid, all radio output seemingly had to be overtly positive!

18 FIRST HAND EXPERIENCE OF SECOND HAND LOVE (RADIO EDIT)

A straight to the point radio edit – we thought this could be a single or a focus track as it turned out really well, although our radio plugger didn't like it. So what do we know?!

19 NIGHTHAWKS FEATURING CHRISTEENE (CHRIS & COSEY REMIX)

I recorded the original backing track for the CD that went with my autobiography box set. Never intended to be on the album, Marc thought differently when he heard it by chance, added the topline and asked performance artist CHRISTEENE to duet with him as well as adding extra lyrics. This turned out to be a highlight of the album. An extended version appears on the vinyl of '*Happiness Now Extended'. This Chris & Cosey Remix, loved by both me and Marc, featured on the *Bruises On All My Illusions* 12" which completely sold out on original release in late 2021. **RP**

● ***'*Happiness Now Completed' and '*Happiness Now Extended' are out now on BMG and available from softcell.co.uk. Soft Cell play live throughout summer, including headlining Heritage Live at Audley End on August 10 and as part of BBC Radio 2 In The Park on September 16.***

The Complete FUN BOY THREE

5CD/DVD Box Set

This newly remastered 69 track collection bringing together 'The Fun Boy Three' and 'Waiting' albums, along with non-album singles, b-sides, remixes, and a live concert including a host of previously unreleased recordings.

Released 4th August 2023

Also available remastered limited vinyl editions of 'The Fun Boy Three' and 'Waiting' albums

PAUL HARDCASTLE

4CD Box Set
A 63-track collection pulling together the albums 'Paul Hardcastle' and 'No Winners' along with a selection of Single Mixes, B-sides, Extended and Rare Remixes.

Booklet includes a new interview with Paul Hardcastle and liner notes from Paul Sexton.

Released 28th July 2023

IN THE MIX

From working with Madonna on the 'Dick Tracy' soundtrack to becoming one of the first US musicians to land a K-pop hit, **Jeff Vincent** revisits his life in music!

"Seymour used to call me 'the chameleon', because he'd throw these projects at me and I would just immerse myself in them," laughs songwriter and producer Jeff Vincent.

That Seymour is, of course, Seymour Stein; the legendary founder of Sire Records who launched Madonna - to whom he introduced Jeff in the late-'80s. But rewind for a second - how did the up-and-coming Chicago musician attract the attention of one of music's most-renowned execs?

"It all comes back to PWL," laughs Jeff of his penchant for Stock Aitken Waterman. "I spent all my money to get to Midem, which happens in Cannes and it's where musicians and writers go to get deals. My booth was opposite this bubbly girl who was playing her one song on repeat all day - who turned out to be Sinitta and the song was *Toy Boy*!

"She told me about this party that anyone who was anyone would be at. So I went to the hotel and lied my way in; I pretended that I *was* a PWL artist and I had my demo tape with me, because I knew that if the security guys listened to it they wouldn't know the difference!"

It was there that he handed his tape to Stein and ultimately walked away with a publishing deal, setting straight to work on an album for Paul Lekakis, who had already landed a hit with *Boom Boom (Let's Go Back To My Room)*. "They actually took him to a shopping mall and did a video of him lip syncing to my stuff, which is when they said, 'This will work, totally'," he laughs. "But they also said, 'We want you to get rid of the PWL sound', so they brought in Daniel Abraham - who did a lot of work with Duran Duran - who knocked the SAW out of me and we produced Paul's album."

During the mixing, Jeff got a call from Stein to go to his office. "I walked in and there's Madonna sitting right there," he laughs. "They made fun of me forever because my face turned white and I was like, 'Holy shit!', and she says, 'I was told that you really love the music from the '30s and '40s - I'm doing a movie called 'Dick Tracy' and I need some songs: do you have anything?'"

Heading straight to the nearest piano, Jeff began playing and the pair started singing along to what became *Rompin' & Stompin'* (performed by Al Jarreau in the film), with Jeff securing a featured spot on the soundtrack with the Andy Paley duet, *Pep, Vim and Verve*.

"Of course, she got extremely inspired by the whole thing and pulled out of the soundtrack to do 'I'm Breathless' (1990)," he sighs. "But it was fine and the opportunity to be in the Madonna camp for a while was so inspirational. She had music executives eating out of her hands - I mean, she's Madonna for heaven's sake!"

Having kicked off the decade in the company of the Queen of Pop, Jeff segued into film on a more permanent basis, collaborating with the biggest names in the biz. "I was in Paul Simon's apartment with Seal and Springsteen and Rickie Lee Jones, who grabbed my arm and was like, 'You're gonna be my arm candy for the night!' I was thrust into this world and it was incredible," he admits of working on soundtracks like Forest Whittaker's 'A Rage In Harlem' (1991) and 'Wild Orchid' (1989) with Mickey Rourke, before he was sent over to England for a meeting with Dead Or Alive, who were considering a return to PWL.

"Seymour arranged for me to go to Pete Burns' house and meet him and Steve, who were both really wonderful," he remembers. "It was actually remarkably dull; I wanted to walk in and be ripped to shreds - that's how I pictured meeting Pete - but they were both so lovely. I ended up not being the right fit at the time, but it was really nice to meet them."

In the years since, he's enjoyed No. 1s globally with artists including K-pop boy band Shinhwa and provided music for multiple TV shows, and has now teamed up with Australian star Peter Wilson and returned to his PWL roots on a new EP, 'Saw The Signs'.

"We imagined ourselves in 1988 and we were very painstaking about all the sounds that were used," he smiles. "So it sounds like it would have back then and that's the point; we wanted it to sound literally, in every single way, like it came out in 1988." **RP**

● ***'Saw The Signs' is out September 14 on Energise.***

WORDS CONNOR GOTTO **PHOTO** COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

SONGS OF THE summer '23

What's on your summer playlist? We've narrowed down 20 of our favourite releases of the year so far - head over to our Spotify page for even more!

KYLIE MINOGUE
PADAM PADAM (BMG)

Without question *the* song of summer 2023, Kylie has taken the world by storm with the lead single from her 16th album, 'Tension', returning to the Top 10 of the UK charts for the first time in over a decade and making waves globally like she hasn't since 'Fever' in 2001! Written by Norwegian singer and songwriter Ina Wroldsen together with producer Lostboy, the sultry electronic earworm is a bold move from the pop icon - and if the rest of 'Tension' is half as good then we're in for a treat come September!

ALISON GOLDFRAPP
SO HARD SO HOT (SKINT)

After more than two decades fronting Goldfrapp, the duo's namesake vocalist reemerged earlier this year with her sensational solo album, 'The Love Invention', which has been on heavy rotation ever since and is the perfect soundtrack for sweaty summer nights. The first single from the record is a pumping electronic anthem that celebrates the unadulterated pleasure and euphoric freedom of the club, with the artist's captivating, ethereal vocal front and centre for a track that instantly sounds like a dance classic. To the floor!

GWEN STEFANI
TRUE BABE (INTERSCOPE)

In recent years, No Doubt legend Gwen has been particularly unpredictable when it comes to solo releases, shelving two albums in the past decade, including the planned home for previous singles *Let Me Reintroduce Myself* and *Slow Clap*. But this time around things seem different and *True Babe* is her most authentic release in years, harking back to her classic run with the group while remaining effortlessly cool and timeless. The reaction when she performed it live was electric - hopefully we'll *finally* see album No. 5 sometime soon...

BONNIE MCKEE
SLAY (SELF-RELEASED)

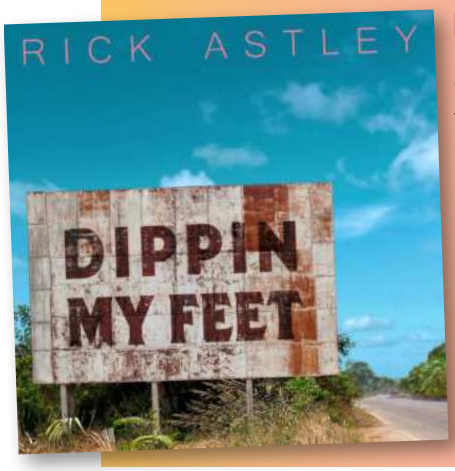
You may not know her name but you *definitely* know some of Bonnie McKee's biggest hits: think Katy Perry (*Teenage Dream*, *Part Of Me*, *Roar*), Britney Spears (*Hold It Against Me*) and Taio Cruz (*Dynamite*). *Slay* is the lead single from her upcoming second studio album, 'Hot City', which dates back to 2013 and has been sitting on the shelf for the past decade, waiting to finally see the light of day. With a sound not dissimilar to *those* hit records and a killer vocal from the singer-songwriter, now is the perfect time to slip back 10 years and indulge in her pop perfection!

TEXAS
AFTER ALL (PIAS)

As they celebrate the 35th anniversary of their first performance together, the lead single from Texas' latest best-of collection is an instant classic, sitting neatly among the best of their impressive catalogue with Sharleen Spiteri's unmistakeable vocal unchanged more than three decades later. With hits like *Black Eyed Boy*, *Inner Smile* and *Summer Son* instantly evoking hot summer's days, the Scottish guitar group's sound is synonymous with the season and their latest offering is more than deserving of its place alongside the very best the band has delivered so far.

BEVERLEY KNIGHT
LAST ONE ON MY MIND (BMG)

From soul and R&B classics to dance-pop bangers, Beverley Knight does it all - and when it comes to the lead track from her latest LP, 'The Fifth Chapter', she's back with a bold and sassy disco extravaganza that sees her take centre stage and command the dance floor with ease. Showcasing her vocal prowess, it's an empowered delivery and a fierce message from the multi-hyphenate about stepping out of the shadow of the past and into a bright future, with all the singalong drama we've come to crave!



RICK ASTLEY
DIPPIN MY FEET (BMG)

The Rick Astley renaissance in recent years has been nothing short of spectacular and absolutely deserved for one of the most recognisable voices to come out of the '80s! Returning with his ninth album, 'Are We There Yet?', in October, its lead single is the first flavour of the record and sees the SAW protege take an americana-inspired road trip across state lines, no doubt inspired by his recent arena tour of the US. Ironically, it was recorded and produced in his home garage just outside of London, but we're ready and waiting to see what else he's conjured up!

SOPHIE ELLIS-BEXTOR
LOST IN THE SUNSHINE
(COOKING VINYL)

Her latest album, 'HANA', saw Sophie return to the UK Top 10 with a stunning musical voyage inspired by a family trip to Japan - and its second single captures that wanderlust, evoking the excitement of summer holidays and the guilt-free indulgence that leaving behind everyday life brings. Underpinned by synths and showcasing her distinctive vocals over an earworm hook, it's another superb offering from one of British pop's very best.

JAKE SHEARS
LAST MAN DANCING (MUTE)

The title song from the US star's second solo effort encompasses the themes of the record and captures his love of throwing massive, all-night house parties and dancing the night away like no one's watching. While the LP draws on influences from club and dance classics to elements of trance and techno, *Last Man Dancing* is one of the more straightforward pop offerings, with allusions to ABBA and even early Scissor Sisters, it's a winning formula that delivers a bold pop anthem for living unapologetically.

THE WEEKND X MADONNA X PLAYBOI CARTI
POPULAR (REPUBLIC)

Lifted from the soundtrack to his HBO series, 'The Idol', The Weeknd teams up with rapper Playboi Carti and the Queen of Pop herself on a mid tempo R&B number musing the pitfalls of fame and fortune and the hunger to reach celebrity status by any means possible. The slick tune became a sleeper hit, climbing into the Top 20 of the charts and has a cool, laid back vibe that has us reaching for something on ice - perfect for long summer afternoons in the heat.

ADAM LAMBERT X SIGALA
YOU MAKE ME FEEL (MIGHTY REAL) (WARNER)

Celebrating Pride In London, the Queen frontman joins forces with British DJ and producer Sigala on a pumped-up cover of Sylvester's disco classic, bringing the LGBTQ+ anthem into the 21st century while honouring its timeless appeal. As expected, the vocal performance is on point and it's all for a good cause, with the single helping launch Pride's Never March Alone campaign, which shows allyship for the trans community.

DANNII MINOGUE
WE COULD BE THE ONE (TWOFOUR)

Reuniting with writer and producer Ian Masterson on her first single release in seven years, *We Could Be The One* originally debuted as the theme song to Dannii's BBC dating show, 'I Kissed A Boy', and rocketed straight to the top of the UK iTunes Chart upon its full release. Armed with a set of remixes from Trouser Enthusiasts, Until Dawn and Bright Light Bright Light, it's a feelgood electro-pop romp and a reminder that, 16 years after her most recent album, 'Club Disco', Dannii remains a force to be reckoned with in the pop world.

ANASTACIA
BEST DAYS (EDEL)

Back with her first album in six years, the early-'00s diva delivers a vocal extravaganza on her soaring, loosely-translated cover of *Tage Wie Diese (Days Like These)* by German punk rock band, Die Toten Hosen. Lifted from an LP that celebrates German pop and bears her own unique spin on a selection of hand-picked tracks, *Best Days* has exactly the kind of roaring guitar riffs and dazzling vocals that sun-soaked summer afternoons are made for.

LOUISE
HIGH HOPES (BMG)

Three decades in pop is impressive in itself, but to be creating career-best work at this stage in a career is exemplary! The lead single from 'Greatest Hits', the funky *Super Magic*, leans into a Jam & Lewis-inspired soundscape, but for its follow-up the ex-Eternal star goes gospel for a soaring anthem that looks to a brighter future and celebrates moving on from strife and living in the moment. It's a mantra we could all use from time to time with a standout vocal from the '90s pop icon.

EVERYTHING BUT THE GIRL
NO ONE KNOWS WE'RE DANCING (BUZZIN' FLY/ VIRGIN)

A phenomenal comeback LP, Tracey Thorn and Ben Watt's 'Fuse' is a masterpiece in itself and the opening song to Side B, *No One Knows We're Dancing*, showcases the very best that the duo has to offer. Over slick electronic beats, her vocals radiate life in a mid tempo ode to long nights spent in sweaty clubs, with an overarching sense of euphoria underpinned by an aching melancholy and longing for a time gone by. Summertime sadness, indeed.

BELINDA CARLISLE
BIG BIG LOVE (BMG)

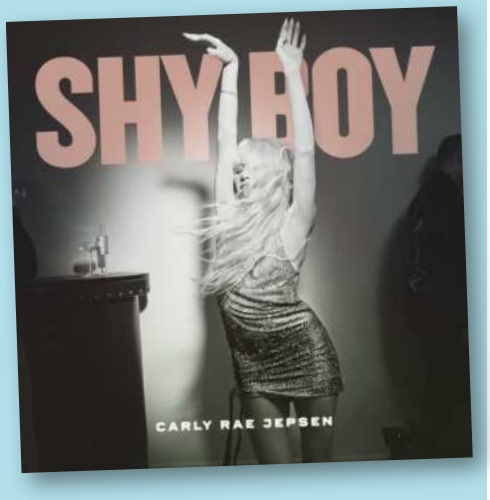
The Go-Go's legend had planned to retire before being lured back into the studio by songwriter supremo, Diane Warren, who gifted her five pop gems, reminiscent of her early solo output on albums like 'Heaven On Earth' (1987) and 'Runaway Horses' (1989), for her latest EP, 'Kismet'. And thank heavens she did - Belinda sounds better than ever and the lead single, the bouncy *Big Big Love*, defies you to get up and dance like it's the '80s all over again in a rallying cry to lose all inhibitions and surrender to love.

P!NK
TRUSTFALL (RCA)

Returning to the top of the UK charts earlier this year with her ninth LP, 'Trustfall', P!nk's single of the same name proved the biggest hit from the record, helped along with a stellar EDM-influenced production from rising DJ and producer, Fred Again. After vowing she's *Never Gonna Not Dance Again* on her previous release, the superstar turns up the BPM on a celebration of grabbing life by the horns and living each and every moment to the full.

SHANIA TWAIN
GIDDY UP! (EMI)

You know it's going to be good when there's an exclamation point in the title! This country pop romp from Shania's chart-topping sixth album, 'Queen Of Me', is an instant pick-me-up that wouldn't sound out of place on any of her classic albums and embodies the feelgood vibe of her latest offering. Co-written with songwriting giants Jessica Agombar and David Stewart, it's classic Shania through and through and, 30 years on from the release of her debut, proof that the pop legend remains at the top of her game.



CARLY RAE JEPSEN
SHY BOY (INTERSCOPE)

Building on her tradition of 'Side B' releases, the Canadian star's latest LP, 'The Loneliest Time', is followed by a sequel record, 'The Loveliest Time', from which *Shy Boy* serves as the lead single. Inspired by returning to normality in the wake of the pandemic and learning to interact with the world once again, the groovy tune is the perfect soundtrack to sstepping out into the sunshine and embracing human connections - a reality that, at one point, seemed like a luxury.

FLO X MISSY ELLIOTT
FLY GIRL (ISLAND)

One of the hottest girl groups to emerge on the pop scene in recent years, *Fly Girl* sees FLO team up with hip-hop legend Missy Elliott and celebrate the classic R&B sound of the '90s with an interpolation of her own 2002 single, *Work It*. The spring release followed UK and US tours and came ahead of a summer of huge gigs for the trio, with festival dates across the country, and became their most successful release yet, landing them a spot in the UK Top 40.

QUICK READ

Shooting star

Dollar enjoyed a run of hits that saw them become one of the most recognisable acts of the early '80s - a legacy Thereza Bazar is resurrecting as she returns to the stage for a UK tour!

For decades, Thereza Bazar has put her Dollar heyday firmly in the past, but now - for the 45th anniversary of their debut - she's stepping back into the spotlight with a tour celebrating all the hits!

"Three years ago, I was asked to write a book and that made me start listening to my music again and revisiting all the things that I did," explains the singer from her home in Sydney, Australia. "It was like opening Pandora's Box - bang, one thing led to another and that's why I'm here at this point."

There's plenty to take in; having scored a run of hits like *There's A Whole Lot Of Loving* and *You Don't Have To Say You Love Me* with Guys 'n' Dolls, Thereza and David Van Day left the group and formed Dollar in 1978, making their chart debut that year with the Top 20 hit, *Shooting Stars*, from their album of the same name.

More success followed, with *Love's Gotta Hold On Me*, *I Wanna Hold Your Hand* and *Mirror Mirror (Mon Amour)* going Top 10, and *Hand Held In Black And White* and *Videotheque* becoming classics of the era, but as the real-life romance between the pair soured, so ended their record-releasing streak.

Although a hit on stage, it was behind the scenes that Thereza was most at ease. "I loved being in the record company offices," she beams. "I wasn't hanging out with the pop stars, because they were so creative and talented and I always felt sort of on the back foot, but in a business setting I could negotiate and have conversations with people in the music industry."

That's not to say she wasn't wholly involved in the creative process too. "I'm not a control freak and I'm not a micromanager at all, but I like things to be done properly, which comes from learning ballet at the age of two and a half," laughs the singer, who also worked with Gary Numan on his 1982 tracks *Noise Noise* and *Bridge? What Bridge* and tried her hand at production with Birmingham band Paparazzi. "I've re-recorded and remixed songs 10 times because of certain bits I didn't like when I should have just accepted them, but I always keep pushing until I find the ultimate. Even now, I hide behind the sofa if one of our videos or 'Top Of The Pops' performances comes on, because I think, 'Why did I do that?', or ,'What was I wearing?', or, 'The shoes are wrong'. When you're a perfectionist, you always want the ultimate, but it's one of my flaws."

When Dollar parted company in early '83, Thereza signed as a solo artist with MCA and teamed up with legendary producer, Arif Mardin (Diana Ross, Chaka Khan, David Bowie), on her solo LP, 'The Big Kiss' (1985). Featuring the title track single and *Too Much in Love*, the album reportedly cost half a million pounds to produce and was tipped for massive success, but record company trouble just prior to its release resulted in disappointing sales.

"It hurts so much to this day because I'm so proud of the recordings," she admits. "I haven't listened to it for a long time because I felt so responsible; I took it all as if it was my fault. The thing that freaked me out is everyone said, 'You've got five Top 10 hits here - which one should we go with first?', and, 'You're the English answer to Madonna' - I was just terrified with all the pressure! So when it all fell apart, I was going, 'Why didn't I stop this?', but I couldn't, because you can't stop a record label falling apart..."

> "I HIDE BEHIND THE SOFA IF ONE OF OUR VIDEOS OR 'TOP OF THE POPS' PERFORMANCES COMES ON!"

It put an end to Thereza's stint as a solo artist and, in seeking comfort, she reverted to what she knew best: Dollar. "I could either completely go into a nervous breakdown and get depressed, which thank goodness I never experienced, or I could pick up the phone and call David Van Day and go back to what I thought was a safe space."

In 1986, they returned with a pair of singles, *We Walked In Love* and *Haven't We Said Goodbye Before*, the latter of which "would have been better with another artist", she reflects, while the former - intended as their big comeback - only brings back memories of the "horrible" video shoot. "Being in love, having him throw me in the bath and *that* cherry thing - what was I thinking," Thereza adds of the scene in which she playfully feeds him fruit before smooching on the sofa.

Decades later, Thereza's headed back to the '80s

"That shows where my head was; I was so messed up with what had happened that I would just say 'yes' to anything. And in fact, the best scene is at the very end of the video, when we're on the balcony and I have my hair tied back, because I just wanted to get in the taxi and go home."

A Hi-NRG cover of Erasure's *Oh L'Amour* became Dollar's final Top 10 hit in 1987 and, 35 years on from their final release, Thereza has enlisted vocalist Stephen Fox to join her on the road, insisting a reunion of the classic line-up is off the cards. "David doesn't talk to me and he hasn't in a long time. I don't think his wife likes me very much because I made a comment about them both performing *Mirror Mirror* on an episode of 'Come Dine With Me', saying if they want to murder a song, please choose a Bucks Fizz one," she shrugs, referencing his ill-fated tenure with their '80s chart peers.

"With all that history, it should be water under the bridge, but at 68 I just go, 'That's OK', because I have other stuff going on. Stephen is amazing; we have a synchronicity and he's creative, so it's all new and fresh and we're going to do it our way, which is going to be fun!"

She adds: "There's a new love and respect for older people in the entertainment world. There's a real shift. In the '80s you had to be young, but there's been a change and, also, with maturity comes this incredible courage and freedom to go out and do whatever I want, which has just been liberating!" **RP**

● ***Thereza Bazar's Dollar hits the road from September 20 with dates across the UK.***

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

GIRLS & BOYS

Launching into a summer of shows, check out all the action from **Blur**'s two-night residency at London's Wembley Stadium!

Fresh from chart-topping success with Gorillaz, Damon Albarn was on top form

Albarn wasn't shy of getting up close and personal with the crowd

Alongside hits from the past three decades, Blur previewed material from the new LP

Fans flocked from far and wide to see the Britpop icons

SETLIST

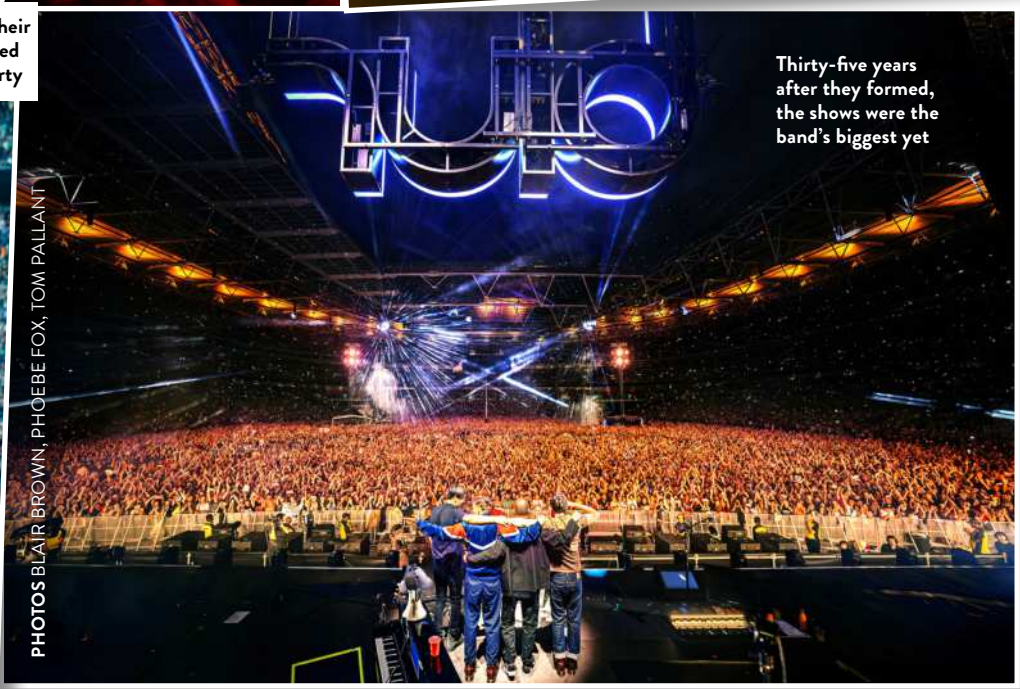
1. *St. Charles Square*
2. *There's No Other Way*
3. *Popscene*
4. *Tracy Jacks*
5. *Beetlebum*
6. *Trimm Tabb*
7. *Villa Rosie*
8. *Stereotypes*
9. *Out Of Time*
10. *Coffee & TV*
11. *Under The Westway*
12. *End of a Century*
13. *Country House*
14. *Parklife (with Phil Daniels)*
15. *To The End*
16. *Oily Water'*
17. *Advert*
18. *Song 2*
19. *This Is A Low*
20. *Lot 105 (first time since 1994)*
21. *Girls & Boys*
22. *For Tomorrow*
23. *Tender (with London Community Gospel Choir)*
24. *The Narcissist*
25. *The Universal*

As the sun set over London, the scale of the production shone through

Blur's ninth album, 'The Ballad of Darren', is out now

Over 30 years since their debut, the group proved they're still hot property

The epic weekend saw Blur perform to over 150,000 fans



Thirty-five years after they formed, the shows were the band's biggest yet

PHOTOS BLAIR BROWN, PHOEBE FOX, TOM PALLANT

QUICK READ

I'M A DREAMER

In the '90s she topped the charts with Livin' Joy's dance smash *Dreamer*, but **Janice Robinson** has had several lives in music...

WORDS CONNOR GOTTO

In the summer of 1995, Livin' Joy's *Dreamer* dominated the world charts, hitting No. 1 in the UK, becoming a Top 10 smash across Europe and even entering the US Billboard Hot 100.

Behind the dance anthem was Janice Robinson; the New Jersey-born singer-songwriter whose life in music began at the start of the decade when she toured with New Kids On The Block and later joined Snap!, before a run-in with Italian house producers Gianni and Paolo Visnadi led to her biggest success.

The song still resonates today: "When I step on stage and I sing *Dreamer* and people know my words, what that does for me emotionally... It's a euphoric feeling." But the journey to the dance smash took a number of turns.

Since the age of five when she began singing in church and discovered her ability to "bring people joy" through her voice, the US star set her sights on a career in music. "That made me realise I was making people happy and it consumed my whole being; it was all I wanted to do," she reflects.

"So I learned what I was supposed to do with my life at five years old and that made me an outsider. I wasn't popular; I had that one rough season in high school when you follow behind the bad kids, but that didn't last long because my father took me out of that school and put me in the iconic Eastside High - which is what the Morgan Freeman movie 'Lean On Me' is based on!"

There, she "spent a lot of time sharpening my skills, singing every day, playing the piano" - "When everybody was over there partying, I was in the piano room for hours," Janice admits - before she was invited to tour with New Kids On The Block as the backing vocalist for their opening act, Rick Wes, during the North American leg of the group's 1990 'Magic Summer Tour'.

"Maurice Starr, who created New Edition and then New Kids On The Block, had this young Elvis kind of kid who had three Black girls behind him called Lady Soul and we were on Epic Records," she shares. "We were low on the totem pole, but it was a stadium tour and one of those moments in my journey where I'm like, 'My first tour was a stadium tour, travelling around with the biggest boy band at the time'. And I learned everything!"

> **WHEN I STEP ON STAGE AND I SING DREAMER AND PEOPLE KNOW MY WORDS... IT'S A EUPHORIC FEELING!**

Fresh off the road with NKOTB, another touring opportunity presented itself; this time as lead vocalist for Eurodance legends Snap!, who had enjoyed massive hits with *The Power* and *Ooops Up*, following the departure of original frontwoman Penny Ford.

"They had a big falling out and I was hired as the replacement singer to do the world tour," she laughs. "So when people came to the shows, they saw me - and a lot of people don't know that. I normally leave Snap! off my interviews because I never made a Snap! record, but honey I was turning out them live shows with Turbo B and *everybody* around the world saw me!

"I was going as Lady J - that was the name he gave me - so I was Lady Soul with Rick, then I was Lady J. But by touring with Snap! I met a lot of people all around the world, I ended up living in Greece for a while, and then Italy, which is what brought me to the Livin' Joy producers."

When Janice met Paolo and Gianni Visnadi, she didn't immediately set out to join their latest act; in fact, the two were already members of Alex Party, which went on to have the hit *Don't Give Me Your Life* in 1995, while she had signed a contract with DJ and producer Joe T Vannelli as Janice Robinson. But her boyfriend at the time was pals with the Visnadis and, knowing they wanted to make a record to rival Robin S' *Show Me Love*, set them up in the studio to collaborate.

"I said, 'OK guys, I've got to go to Milan but let me live with the track and I'll be back on Thursday'," she recalls, revealing the anthem was written during the girls trip. Part club banger, part confessional from a minister's daughter celebrating her approach to life, it was a coming of age moment for the young star, who by ▶

her mid-20s had toured the world twice over and played some of the biggest venues on the planet, but was only just establishing her own identity as a performer.

"'*Now I close my eyes and I'm dreaming...*' I'm dreaming where I want to be in life, that's what that all means," she smiles. "It just makes you feel good and I think my spirit and who I am as a human being is in that song. Even the name Livin' Joy, because I didn't want them to use my name - I don't think it would have had the same outcome. I wanted to keep Janice Robinson separate."

But the honeymoon period didn't last and contract disputes led to Janice exiting Livin' Joy, to be replaced by Tameko Star. Of the decision, she admits: "The contract that was presented to me just felt like a coffin. It felt like death. The language - I was like, 'This is a slave contract!' The Italian producers, they like to exploit - let's just call it what it is."

Janice says the duo attempted to "erase" her from Livin' Joy history with the video for *Dreamer*, sharing: "They made a video with just a dancer. Oh, yeah. But there's a lot of acts from the '90s that didn't have the real vocalists on stage. Look at Black Box - that's Martha Walsh's voice - or look at Corona. Back in the '90s, it was just like that - especially with dance music. There was a lot of that going on back then!"

> **TINA TURNER WAS THE BLUEPRINT FOR EVERYTHING I DID AND EVEN NOW WHEN I FACE ADVERSITY SHE GIVES ME THE COURAGE AND STRENGTH TO STAND BACK UP**

Janice went on to sign a deal with Warner Records and released her debut solo album, 'The Color Within Me', in 1999, and the following year returned to the road, this time with the legendary Tina Turner as the opening act on the North American leg of her 'Twenty Four Seven Tour'.

"It was like a fairy godmother coming down, taking her wand and saying, 'I pick *you* to be the opening act on my farewell tour'," she beams. "It felt like she was saying 'goodbye' and introducing her fans to me, like passing the torch, and it was just amazing. I watched her every night, because Tina was the blueprint for everything I did and even now when I face adversity she gives me the courage and strength to stand back up. Tina is an inspiration unlike anything we've ever seen."

In the years since, Janice has continued to record with a run of standalone releases, landing a club hit with the David Morales collaboration, *There Must Be Love*, and recently teaming up with OMG Collective on the ballad, *Just A Little Love*. These days, being a pop star is a side hustle for the multi-hyphenate, who spends 180 days of the year as a 7th grade English teacher at a local Middle School.

But she doesn't shy away from her legacy in the classroom. "When my students see that I have this other life, it's a tool to get them to wake up inside their own purpose, inside their own dreams," smiles the singer. "It's about giving a whole new generation hope for themselves. But you've got to work; nobody knocked on the door and said, 'Hey, you're gonna have a hit record in 28 countries!' It didn't happen that way..." **RP**

● ***Just A Little Love with OMG Collective is out now. Janice will perform at London's Royal Albert Hall with Ministry Of Sound Classical on September 16. Tickets are on sale now.***

PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

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COVER FEATURE | Delta Goodrem
From the heart
Ahead of her first headline tour of the UK and Europe and the launch of her eighth studio album, Delta Goodrem celebrates 20 years of hits and reveals there's plenty still to come!
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From the heart

Ahead of her first headline tour of the UK and Europe and the launch of her eighth studio album, **Delta Goodrem** celebrates 20 years of hits and reveals there's plenty still to come!

WORDS CONNOR GOTTO

Twenty years ago, Australian superstar Delta Goodrem shot to the top of the global charts with her debut album, 'Innocent Eyes' (2003), bringing with it a run of hit records like *Born To Try* and *Lost Without You* which established her as one of the country's most successful pop artists of all time.

With stratospheric highs came devastating lows, however, and during the week of its release the 18-year-old, who was preparing to launch the LP in the US at the time, was diagnosed with Hodgkin's Lymphoma (a form of blood cancer) and immediately cancelled all of her promo plans to undergo months of chemotherapy and radiation treatment, and recuperate.

Having beaten the illness, she returned the following year with her second album, 'Mistaken Identity' (2004), and resumed a chart-topping career that she's celebrating with her first-ever headline tour of the UK and Europe and the launch of her eighth studio album, channelling the female pop greats she admires and proving that, two decades on, she's still at the top of her game!

> **After waiting so long it's really important for me to get out there and do it now**

> **I'm looking forward to seeing where the music takes me**

ON THE RUN

"That last album was so intense and heavy; it was me at the piano asking, 'Where do we come from? How did I get here? What do I need to do to heal and work through?'... It was a real deep dive," admits the singer-songwriter of 2021's 'Bridge Over Troubled Dreams', conceived at the height of Sydney's strict Covid lockdown, which encouraged her to take a step back and "have a retrospective moment".

"But when the borders opened up and we could go back to travelling, I toured with the Backstreet Boys and I was surrounded by so much fun, which gave me a sense of freedom in what I wanted to do now!"

That, of course, is the as-yet-untitled new LP from the superstar, led by the single, *Back To Your Heart*; a shimmering, high-energy extravaganza of a pop track that sees Delta channel personal influences like '80s icon Belinda Carlisle for a three-and-a-half minute slice of unadulterated euphoria. "It was like, 'This is my lane, let's lean into that'," she smiles. "My shows are about empowering everybody in the room and having that unity that comes from being together, which is what made me want to write this particular album."

Running in parallel with her 'Innocent Eyes' 20th anniversary celebrations, the new material sees Delta let loose and lean into an uninhibited lane of pure pop that's worlds away from the introspective material of her early years. "Those parts both live in me; I've always been naturally playful - I just want to play with everyone - but I think my songwriting style, because I am an analyst and I've always been a life writer, always comes back to meaning and sentiment," she reflects.

"On the last album, a lot of it was about moving forwards in life and trusting that you are on the right path, and all of those things will always be a huge interest, because I am wonderous about the world. But the joy of being on stage and seeing people's beautiful faces - I just want to have fun with them. So with where I'm at right now, I want to bring in those other influences and have fun again, because we've all had serious moments and this show is about rocking out with a great energy and just being together. But there will always be room for a power ballad!"

For the tour, Delta once again reunites with musical director Steve Anderson, while her partner, Matt Copley, is also an integral part of her new material, with the pair writing much of the record together. "During lockdown we did Bunkerdown Sessions on Instagram Live, which was great because he plays every instrument and he's super quick at picking things up, so we got to do all these different themes - as well as my songs," she shares.

"That really started the ability for us to move into production together and it's been great. He's such a talented musician and he is able to translate really fast, so we produce the tracks together and he plays a lot of the instruments that I don't, so we just keep bouncing off each other."

The sessions have proven so fruitful that, even though the album isn't yet finished, they have more than enough songs ready and waiting - they just need to decide what makes the final cut. "I always say that making an album is like a race; all the songs are running next to each other, some drop off and then some stay with you because they're still resonating. So that's the way I look at it and you never know which songs will pull through."

> **"I toured with the Backstreet Boys and I was surrounded by so much fun, which gave me a sense of freedom in what I wanted to do now"**

With new music and shows to look forward to, it's been a long time coming for Delta to launch back into her career on a global scale, now her schedule's been freed up after exiting 'The Voice Australia' following its 2020 season.

"Doing the show, we would shoot for six or seven months of the year, which I did for almost 10 years, then before that I was in the US and we had the *Believe Again* era, and 'Mistaken Identity' before that," she reflects. "But I went back to Oz with 'Child Of The Universe' (2012) and did 'The Voice', then lockdown happened. So even though I still came over to Europe

sometimes, I couldn't really do the touring because I was on a different path... until now."

BORN TO TRY

Born in Sydney, Australia, Delta entered the entertainment business early, working as a child actor in commercials and learning piano at the age of seven, from which time she amassed a collection of self-penned material which, by the age of 15, had landed her an artist development deal with Sony.

"My first song was called *Raindrops Fall* and the lyric was *'Raindrops fall like shadows of my tears'*," she laughs. "It was like, *'This day is made for dreaming / A day of dreams'*, and there was always a lot of fantasy in there. Then *Lost For Words* was the next one - and they were just inspired by really simple things, anything that happened at school or whatever."

Despite securing a deal on the strength of her own songs, it was a cover of Angela Via's *I Don't Care*, written by David Frank, Steve Kipner and Pamela Sheyne - who had also penned Christina Aguilera's breakthrough hit, *Genie In A Bottle* - that was selected as Delta's first single, with the track peaking at a disappointing No. 64 Down Under. The album and a planned second single, *A Year Ago Today*, were pushed aside as a result and as she and Sony reevaluated the direction of her career, the rising star took up the role as shy school girl and aspiring singer Nina Tucker in 'Neighbours'.

"The person who cast me on 'Neighbours' was an amazing human being and we ended up writing my character together," she giggles. "But I cared a lot about my music when I joined the show and as much as I enjoyed acting and playing a character, I said, 'This has to merge in with everything else that's going on', because within two months of being on the show, *Born To Try* came out!"

Steering her sound in a more mature, piano-led direction, the track - which premiered on the soap - was a near-instant success, topping the ARIA singles chart and setting up high expectations for her debut album, while going Top 3 in the UK. It was a testament to Delta's prowess as a songwriter, but the track had a very unlikely beginning.

"It's so funny; I'd been doing the whole thing with *I Don't Care* - which is totally not my ethos, because I really *do* care, genuinely - and I was doing a signing with this other young artist called Selwyn, who had a hit with *Buggin' Me*, and literally nobody came," she admits. "I got a bit teary in the back room and this other guy that was there, Audius Mtawarira, who worked on that song, said, 'Well, why don't we just write a song together?'.

> **My shows are about empowering everybody in the room and having that unity that comes from being together**

"So he came to my house and we started writing songs, and from that we wrote *Born To Try*, which changed my life," she smiles. It's no exaggeration; released in November 2002, the single became a global hit, winning two prizes at the ARIA Music Awards - for Best Single and Best Breakthrough Artist - along with the International Viewers' Choice Award at the MTV VMAs, eventually becoming her signature recording.

It paved the way for the album, which also featured the massive hits *Lost Without You*, *Not Me, Not I*, *Predictable* and the title song, *Innocent Eyes*, all of which went to No. 1 in Australia and gave Delta a run of four UK Top 20 smashes. "The songs just took on a life of their own," she beams. "You know, when it rains it pours, so we'd fly over to England for 'Top Of The Pops', then Stateside and back to Oz. So it was really a very special time. And then there were the signings; I held the record for doing 16-hour signings, because people would come to the shopping centres and I'd just sit there signing and signing."

Released in March 2003, 'Innocent Eyes' shot to No. 1 in Australia where it remained for a record-breaking 29 weeks, and reached No. 2 in the UK over the summer. However, the success was bittersweet and while promoting the album, Goodrem was diagnosed with Hodgkin's Lymphoma and spent the rest of 2003 undergoing treatment for the disease. Coming to terms with the anniversary of the pivotal moment in her life and career, two decades later, she candidly admits: "It evokes a bit more emotion because I'm *here*. Twenty years later and we're actually here, in person, in the UK, celebrating the anniversary of this release. So it's really beautiful.

"These are tears of happiness because I really can enjoy it now," she continues. "Everyone's story is different and everyone has their own trajectory in their life and their hopes and dreams, but I've been so lucky to get to do what I love to do at home in Oz, then to be here again this week to launch my first headline tour after so long really is a beautiful thing. It's great!"

> **Twenty years later and we're actually here, in person, in the UK, celebrating the anniversary of 'Innocent Eyes'. It's really beautiful!**

TO THE HEART

Two decades later, the singer-songwriter will revisit the album with a run of 20th anniversary tour dates across Australia later this year and while the shows will feature the LP played live, she insists that when it comes to

material from the sessions that's yet to be heard, the vault is pretty empty.

"A lot of the songs on that album I wrote by myself; I didn't have many co-writers," she admits. "There was Elliott Kennedy and Gary Barlow - who I got to catch up with this week and we spoke about that first trip to Manchester when I was 16 to write with him - but it felt like I would write one song, record it and then on to the next one. I didn't have a plethora of songs; 'Innocent Eyes' was really made one song at a time."

It's a different process now, of course, and Delta has worked with a range of collaborators across her music through the years to draw out the best material. But one thing that hasn't changed is her knack for finding inspiration in everyday situations.

"There was one weekend on that record where I was dating somebody and I had woken up with a voicemail that wasn't for me," she recalls. "I was 17 and I was in the studio with Kara DioGuardi and we wrote *Not Me, Not I* and *Predictable* together, so he gave me two No. 1 songs."

The story behind *Wings* - the title track from her 2016 LP, 'Wings of the Wild' - is far less remarkable. "I had done some shows with Ricky Martin and when we came off we put on these tattoo things, and they were wings," she laughs. "Then, when I got into the studio I was like, 'Wings! Let's make *Wings*!', and that was all because I got off the plane and had these silly little tattoos on. So yeah, anything can be an inspiration!"

One particular muse throughout Delta's career has been her late friend and mentor, Olivia Newton-John, with whom her ties go back years. Having channelled the legendary singer and actress in the 2018 TV miniseries, 'Hopelessly Devoted To You', the pair remained close pals and, following her passing last year at the age of 73 after a long cancer battle, Delta is full of praise for the performer who "paved the way" for her own career.

> **Everyone's journey is different and it really is an individual thing, but this era right now feels really good**

"Olivia was a dear friend of mine and I will continue to celebrate her magnificent, trailblazing self," she smiles, opening up about a relationship in which "it was always a 'yes'". "It would be like, 'I'm doing a Christmas special', and she'd say, 'I'm there'. Or she'd be opening her hospital and I'd always show up. When you have people who are mentors and friends, it's like, 'I'm there for you as you are for me', and we had that."

Another recent loss, that of Tina Turner, was also a blow for the hitmaker, who's quick to point out that, when she was the age Detla is now, the legendary entertainer had yet to reach the peak of her success. "She went through *so* much then at 40 years old moved into this amazing new chapter and started playing stadiums. It was insane!

"I feel like this is my Tina Turner era," she giggles, revealing she has multiple projects on the horizon, including plans to collaborate with Sam Ryder on new music and a pair of films due out later this year.

"There's all these different sidelines that I have going on at the moment, but after waiting so long it's really important for me to get out there and do it now," she smiles. "There's not one singular trajectory and I'm proud of my story; to have continued to do what I love to do throughout all these years and have No. 1 albums consistently, but I still feel like I'm fired up and ready for a new chapter and a new era.

"You know, everyone's journey is different and it really is an individual thing, but this era right now feels really good and I'm looking forward to seeing where the music takes me!" **RP**

● ***Delta Goodrem's 'Hearts On The Run' tour hits the UK on August 22 before heading to mainland Europe on September 3. Her new single, Back To Your Heart, is out August 4.***

PHOTOS CARLOTTA MOYE

REAL GONE KIDS

Revisiting over 35 years of hits with an expansive box set and massive run of world tour dates, **Deacon Blue**'s Ricky Ross and Lorraine McIntosh journey back through the years and reveal what the future holds for the band!

WORDS PAUL HOLLINS

Deacon Blue (l-r): Lewis Gordon, Doug Vipond, Ricky Ross, Lorraine McIntosh, James Prime, Graeme Kelling

> This is the biggest tour that we've done for 30 years - we wouldn't be doing it if we were wanting to stop
>
> **RICKY**

Deacon Blue's first few singles enjoyed limited success, but when their debut album, 'Raintown', came around, nothing could stop the Scottish group's chart domination.

Climbing into the UK Top 20, the record proved a commercial hit and has to date sold around a million copies, spending a year and a half in the charts and paving the way for a career that's endured across the decades and is still going strong.

Following the 35th anniversary of that album, the band returns with a new greatest hits collection and a career-spanning 14CD box set, and before they head out on tour in September, Ricky Ross and Lorraine McIntosh sit down to revisit their phenomenal success so far...

LOADED

As Deacon Blue prepares for their biggest tour in almost 25 years Lorraine is a little nervous. "I look at the venues and the amount of tickets they're hoping to sell and I think, 'God, is that going to happen?!'," laughs the vocalist who, along with husband Ricky, has been a mainstay of the line-up since its inception.

She needn't worry; the band consistently sells out iconic venues such as London's Royal Albert Hall, Birmingham's Symphony Hall and Glasgow's Hydro with ease, and their prowess as a live band has been evident since the very early days when – prior to being signed by CBS Records - they would play in very small venues with most people interested in getting served at the bar.

But after a few years honing their craft on the Glasgow 'live band' circuit, they were signed and quickly established themselves as one of the true breakouts of the mid-to-late '80s.

Away from their Deacon Blue successes, Ricky has carved out a successful solo career and last year he released his seventh solo album, 'Short Stories Volume 2', as well as publishing his first memoir, 'Walking Back Home'.

He also has a weekly show on BBC Radio Scotland called Another Country and makes the occasional stand-in appearance on BBC Radio 2 covering for the likes of Mark Radcliffe, 'Whispering' Bob Harris and Dermot O'Leary.

Meanwhile Lorraine has taken up acting and has landed roles on the big screen in Ken Loach's 'My Name Is Joe' and Lone Scherfig's 'Wilbur Wants to Kill Himself', as well as the popular Scottish soap, 'River City', amongst others.

On the day we catch up, she's just returned from a few months filming for the TV series 'Shetland', which stars Julie Graham and Ashley Jensen – which will return to our screens for its eighth season later in the year. But what about a solo Lorraine McIntosh album? "You're never going to get a solo album from me, I can assure you of that," she chuckles.

"I think the reality of it is I'm not a songwriter. And for all that I love being on the periphery when Ricky's writing, he calls me the editor, which is very nice of him. He says, 'What do you think of this?' and it's great to be able to pass opinions about what you don't like or what you think maybe should happen. So I get to make the comments and then leave him to it."

That working partnership has to-date resulted in 10 studio albums, the most recent of which, 'Riding On The Tide Of Love', arrived in 2021. They all feature in the band's new box set, 'You Can Have It All' - named after a lyric from their hit song, *Wages Day* - which is the most complete retrospective collection Deacon Blue has ever released and gives the band time to reflect on the journey so far.

"I always felt that we put out the albums that I was happy with," smiles Ricky. "I think when you make a final selection for an album there's plenty of time to think about those 12 songs. Early on, I thought it'd be nice when you make a few records, line them all up and have a look at them - but now there's almost too many to do that!"

There's also a CD of new material which includes acoustic reworkings of old classics and a stunning cover version of Bruce Springsteen's *Dancing In The Dark*. 'Peace Will Come' is title of the new album and Lorraine explains: "When this idea came out about the box set Ricky said, 'It's just always nice to do something fresh'. There's just nothing like being able to play a song on a couple of acoustic guitars and a piano and sing."

> "There's just nothing like being able to play a song on a couple of acoustic guitars and a piano and sing"
>
> **LORRAINE**

CLOSING TIME

Deacon Blue's landmark debut, 'Raintown', became a mainstay of the UK Albums Chart and clocked up more than 12 months in the Top 40, but arguably the band's most successful LP was 1989's 'When The World Knows Your Name', which included the hits *Real Gone Kid*, *Fergus Sings The Blues* and *Wages Day*. It also famously knocked Madonna off No. 1 when it was released.

After that, their run of Top 20 singles continued with the release of *Your Swaying Arms* and *Twist And Shout* from 1991's 'Fellow Hoodlums' – the album Ricky said was probably his most enjoyable to record. "We all knew who we were, we all knew what we did well, and we all, I think, played to our strengths," he beams. "I just think we weren't trying to prove anything. For some reason, maybe it didn't go wild in the way that 'When The World Knows Your Name' did in terms of singles, but it just felt like a really enjoyable record to make."

Later, in 1993, they adopted a harder-edged sound on 'Whatever You Say, Say Nothing' and although

the album was critically acclaimed, it wasn't as commercially successful as the band's previous releases. However, it did yield another Top 20 hit single, *Your Town*.

Lorraine explains: "I think after 'Whatever You Say, Say Nothing', we were trying to do what we thought was relevant. We were just a bit lost. And then I think people started to... We started to annoy each other. We'd been working together for a long time, spending an awful lot of our time together and not with our families and all the rest of it. So I think it did feel like a job then. And if it doesn't feel good, I don't think you should do it."

As a result, in 1994 after just eight years together, Deacon Blue announced that their best-of album, 'Our Town', would also be the point at which they would split. Ricky launched his major-label solo career and Lorraine began her acting career, but after a mere five years away, the band reformed for a one-off charity gig which led to a tour and, on an ad-hoc basis, they released a handful of albums with varying degrees of success.

'Homesick' – the group's 2001 album – is the one Ricky says, "was a real problematic record to make, simply because everyone else was off doing their own thing. Lorraine was pregnant, Graeme [Kelling, guitarist] was getting sick and as result I ended up doing most of it myself."

It wasn't until 2012 that the band really returned to the studio and delivered their true 'comeback' album, 'The Hipsters'. "Just getting a chance to make 'The Hipsters' was great," he adds. "It's become an important part of the band's legacy and it won many plaudits and certainly gave the band a renewed sense of energy."

That record was quickly followed by another long-player, 'A New House', in 2014, the same year that saw the band play at the closing ceremony of the Commonwealth Games held in Glasgow. Never one to shy away from politics in his songs, the release of 'A New House' coincided with the vote on Scottish Independence - something Ricky lent his support to - and he even appeared on the BBC's Question Time just ahead of the actual vote. For Lorraine, it features one of her all-time favourite Deacon Blue songs, *I Remember Every Single Kiss*.

> "We all knew who we were, we all knew what we did well, and we all, I think, played to our strengths"
>
> **RICKY**

BELIEVERS

By now Deacon Blue 2.0 was really starting to hit their stride and as the creative-streak continued the band were quickly back in the studio working on 2016's 'Believers', which saw them their highest chart entry in over 20 years when it peaked at No. 13 on the UK Albums Chart.

Ricky has always been a prolific songwriter and at this stage in his career he has become one of the UK's most consistent at his craft - with an uncanny knack of matching a catchy melody with strong lyrics. And so after a trio of albums over a relatively short period, the band took a little break to catch their breath before setting to work on a follow-up.

This time around Ricky also stepped into the role of co-producer alongside bandmate Gregor Philp, who has been the guitarist with Deacon Blue since 'The Hipsters', and 'City Of Love' saw the band riding high on the Albums Chart once again, this time reaching No. 4 – making it their highest-charting album since 'Our Town' back in their '90s heyday.

It was released just as the world went into lockdown but it's an album that really captured the essence of what Deacon Blue is all about and the collection that Lorraine says is her favourite: "It just has some of the best songs Ricky's ever written – and he's written a lot."

And that's very true; in fact, there's over 160 songs included in this new box-set! But with the group looking to the past and touring so extensively at this stage in their career, it's set alarm bells ringing with some fans, who have been setting social media ablaze with questions as to whether this could actually be Deacon Blue's swansong?

However, both Ricky and Lorraine are quick to reassure fans and quash the rumours once and for all. Shaking her head, Lorraine says: "We are loving it more than ever! I think the crucial thing is, the gigs are as good as they ever were, if not even better. So no, we

PHOTOS CAMERON BRISBANE / SIMON MURPHY / COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

> We are loving it more than ever! The gigs are as good as they ever were, if not even better...
>
> **LORRAINE**

have no plans at the moment to stop."

Ricky agrees: "Honestly, this is the biggest tour that we've done for 30 years. There's certainly more people that we are reaching and then we're going back to Australia and South Africa, so it's a big... We honestly wouldn't be doing it if we were wanting to stop."

It seems fitting that, in 1987 when 'Raintown' was giving the band their breakthrough, CD sales outstripped those of vinyl for the first time. Now, 35 years later and with a new CD box-set, Ricky takes a moment to reflect on how their music reaches audiences today.

> Putting a record on or putting a CD on, you really get to know the tracks. There's something very special about that!
>
> **RICKY**

"I still think it's lovely when people listen to a whole album," he smiles. "Increasingly in life, though, I think that's difficult for people to do, because loads of people don't even have CD players or record players in the house anymore.

"But when you stream, you just don't listen to the whole album. There's no doubt about it. I'm not anti-streaming at all but that's one of the downsides with streaming, it doesn't start at the beginning of the album and stop at the end. Whereas putting a record on or putting a CD on, obviously, or even a cassette, you would listen to the whole thing and you really get to know the tracks. There's something very special about that." **RP**

● ***'All The Old 45s – The Very Best of Deacon Blue' and 'You Can Have It All – The Complete Albums Collection' are out September 1 on Cooking Vinyl. The UK & Ireland leg of Deacon Blue's greatest hits tour launches September 15 in Liverpool. Tickets are on sale now.***

STEPPING OUT

Paying tribute to the divas that continue to inspire her, **Claire Richards** goes all-out on her joyous second solo album!

WORDS CONNOR GOTTO

Riding a wave of success that saw her back at the top of the charts last year with Steps' 'Platinum Collection', Claire Richards returns with her sensational new album, 'Euphoria'.

The follow-up to her 2019 debut solo outing, 'My Wildest Dreams', takes the vocal powerhouse straight to the dance floor for an epic celebration of the female artists that made her fall in love with music and helped shape her as a performer and an artist.

Diving deep into the LP, Claire gets candid on her hand-picked song choices, reveals the tracks that got cut along the way, and shares why, almost three-decades into her recording career, she's having more fun than ever!

SURRENDER

"I didn't want to do an album of ballads, especially after 'My Wildest Dreams', because I've enjoyed performing all the old Steps stuff," says the singer of her superb new offering. "I felt like I wanted to carry that one and have a load of bangers that everyone can stick on and be like, 'Oh my God, this is the best playlist anybody has ever put together!"

While her previous LP was a largely mid tempo affair, this time around she goes all out, tackling anthems from across the decades and celebrating her personal favourite artists - not least of all on the lead single, a discoed-up ▶

> *I wanted to have a load of bangers that everyone can stick on and be like, 'Oh my God, this is the best playlist anybody has ever put together'!*

version of Celine Dion's 2002 ballad *I Surrender*. "I always thought that my voice was better suited to ballads but actually, if you think about Celine and Whitney Houston and Donna Summer and Barbra Streisand - who all have that kind of voice - their best songs are bangers," says Claire.

Although she previously performed the track on Steps' 2012 'Ultimate Tour' in its ballad form, there's another Celine track that goes back even further; her cover of *River Deep, Mountain High*, which was Claire's audition song for Steps. "I was thinking about this the other day and I don't actually know why I didn't do that," she laughs. "Maybe it was because I've always done the Celine version and I felt like there was enough Celine on the album already, but it's daft really and I should have done that one. I'm gonna have to record it at some stage!"

"It's also understanding and knowing what your audience wants," she adds, with that thinking also sparking the album title - on the same day she was shooting the artwork, no less - when she was booked to headline the Grand Final Party on the Pier Head at the Eurovision Village in Liverpool.

"At that point *Euphoria* wasn't on the album but someone said, 'You should do a Eurovision song because you've got a captive audience', and that was the obvious choice because, apart from ABBA, it's probably the best Eurovision song ever," she offers, noting her "controversial" take on Loreen's 2012 winning entry. "But we also didn't have a title for the album and we'd spent weeks going through every single word in the dictionary, because I knew I wanted it to be one word and nothing that we thought of felt right.

"So it was in the back of the car on the way to shoot the album cover that we decided to do *Euphoria* for the Eurovision gig and I said, 'Actually, 'Euphoria' is quite a good title - that's what we should call it'. And the album was done by that point - it was only meant to be a 10-track album..."

Although late in the day, they managed to find time and record the song which now appears as the opening number on the record - and as luck would have it, Claire bumped into Loreen at the Attitude Pride Awards. "I was like, 'Thank you so much, you gave me my album title!'

She was very gracious and very lovely about it."

SO EMOTIONAL

The recording of 'Euphoria' was very close to home for Claire; she set up a studio in her office, where she belted out each track before handing them over to producer Steve Anderson to work his magic. "The kids would come home from school and I'd be locked in there," she laughs. "Obviously, there's no music playing because it's in my headphones, so all they can hear is me screeching. I'm sure there were a few moments where they were like, 'Oh God!'"

A glance at the artists behind the tracks she's covered is proof enough of Claire's vocal chops, with Barbra, Celine and Whitney the pinnacle when it comes to all-time great female singers. On tackling the latter's *So Emotional*, she elaborates: "I'm a huge Whitney fan! I always have been; she released the perfect pop records that everybody wanted to make and she seemed to nail it every time, which is why I didn't go with the obvious ones, like *I Wanna Dance With Somebody*. This was something slightly different that I could put my own little spin on."

> ***"With age there's a bit more of a 'fuck it' kind of attitude... We're here to have fun!"***

It's an ethos she stuck with throughout recording, sidestepping Cher's biggest hits ("There's no way I was touching *Believe* or *If I Could Turn Back Time*," she laughs) in favour of *Song For The Lonely*, and opting for Kim Wilde's 1988 'Close' single *Never Trust A Stranger*. "I've seen her do it live twice: once was at the Michael Jackson concert when she supported him in 1988, which was the first concert that I ever went to, and then last year at the '80s Classical concert in Leeds.

"The crowd were singing at the top ▶

THE ONES THAT GOT AWAY

Deluxe edition included, 13 tracks made it on to 'Euphoria', but that's not all Claire recorded. Revisiting the sessions, she reveals there's a handful of additional and alternative material, teasing: "We'll see what happens with this album, because there might have to be a volume two!"

WHITNEY HOUSTON *LOVE WILL SAVE THE DAY*

"That was our first choice and we thought it would be great... but it wasn't! I sounded a bit rubbish and it was really boring, which is a testament to Whitney Houston and what she could do with her voice. It sounds really rangy, but with my tone and my range it just wasn't exciting at all. So we changed it to *So Emotional*, which turned out way better!"

DONNA SUMMER *LOVE'S ABOUT TO CHANGE MY HEART*

"It was between *This Time I Know It's For Real* and *Love's About To Change My Heart* - and there is a vocal somewhere, but it never got finished. We went the other way and it never got to full production level, but there is a vocal out there so you never know, maybe one day...

BELINDA CARLISLE *LEAVE A LIGHT ON*

"We tried to do *Leave A Light On* and I was so excited about doing a Belinda Carlisle song, but that was one that didn't work with my voice. It just wasn't exciting enough. I thought, 'Oh my God, this is gonna be amazing!' and yeah, it wasn't..."

MADONNA *OPEN YOUR HEART*

"Wow, we actually tried more than I thought we did! We tried *Open Your Heart* - I think we only did a verse and a chorus - but we just stopped because it didn't work either. I don't think we have a full vocal of that one, but I'm not sure. I'll have to ask Steve what he's got - he might have ditched it!"

of their voices and it really is the perfect song for me," she smiles, adding: "There's a lot of '80s on the album because that was my childhood. I think a lot of the music that you love is from when you were young, which is part of the reason we went with that song."

As is her decision to take on Donna Summer's *This Time I Know It's For Real*. While 'Euphoria' touches on the Queen of Disco's early repertoire with *No More Tears (Enough Is Enough)* - more on that later - Claire was also keen to celebrate her love of Stock Aitken Waterman. "But the thing with a lot of those records is the originals are so good that it's like, how do you make it different," she muses.

"There was a lot of backwards and forwards on this one because it always just sounded like PWL, so we tried to update it a bit and it took us a while to get to where it is now. And actually, that was one where I re-recorded the vocals a couple of times because I wasn't happy with how I'd done it, but we got there in the end."

Back to *that* classic duet; Claire called on Delta Goodrem for a powerhouse rendition of Barbra and Donna's breakup anthem, which she previously performed live with her Steps bandmates, revealing it was Steve that put the two in contact and that it was touch and go for a while when Delta was forced to take time out after she "overused" her vocal chords

"She said 'yes' and I actually couldn't believe it - and then she went on voice rest for a month," laughs the hitmaker! "Everything's been remote because she was in Australia, but I finally met her when she came over here and it was so nice!"

Meanwhile, it was Andy Bell's team that approached Claire about working with the Erasure star. "Andy Bell and I have known each other since we were on the same season of 'Popstar To Opera Star' in 2011. Our teams got chatting about a possible duet, which I was instantly up for. We suggested doing *Summer Night City* because we knew my album was going to be a covers album" she recalls, with the song selection apt for the synth-pop legend, who topped the charts back in 1992 with Erasure's 'Abba-esque' EP.

FOR REAL

Having become a mainstay in her live solo sets, 'Euphoria' finally sees Claire record the classic *Gloria*, admitting the track has become "an important part of the album because it's quite a new thing for me doing solo stuff". "It was only five years ago that I did my first solo album, out of a 28-year career, but this song already feels like a part of my solo repertoire and it's comfortable, if that makes sense, so I felt like I couldn't not include it," she explains, going on to admit her nerves around working away from Steps.

> ***"I told Loreen, 'Thank you so much, you gave me my album title!' She was very gracious and very lovely about it."***

"I beat myself up about this, because how can I be so nervous and so daunted by getting on that stage by myself when I've been doing this for so long? But Steve always says, 'Just remember that you've been doing it on your own for less than five years' - because I started doing shows in 2019, then lockdown happened, so I'm still getting used to it. But I'm enjoying it more and more and getting less and less nervous now because, especially with this album, the songs are familiar to people and I feel like the crowd is with me because they know what's going on. So I *am* feeling more and more confident each time I get out there on my own."

Winding down the record, a smooth rendition of Stephanie Mills' disco classic *Never Knew Love Like This Before* and a tribute to Claire's idol, the late Karen Carpenter, with *Goodbye To Love* both showcase her vocal prowess - and her ties with the former predate her tenure in Steps.

"I actually recorded it many years ago when I was with TSD and we were trying to get another record deal - which wasn't successful, clearly," she chuckles. "But we went to a producer's house - who turned out to be Mike Stevens, who is Take That's musical director and he was MD for Steps our reunion tour in 2012 - and that was the song we recorded."

Her decision to revisit the track came about after it featured during an emotional funeral scene in Ryan Murphy's LGBTQ+ drama series 'Pose', with Claire adding: "There's that big, famous scene at Candy's memorial where she lip syncs that song and I remember sitting there thinking, 'Oh my God!' I cried my eyes out for a start, but it brought everything back from all those years ago, because I never really thought about it since. So after I did it on [lockdown series] Claireaoke, I knew we had to record it for the album."

Meanwhile, it was her husband, Reece, who was reduced to tears when he heard her Carpenters cover for the first time - something that's never happened throughout her career with Steps. "Well, maybe for other reasons - certainly not because he found them moving," she quips.

'Euphoria' arrives amid a run of solo shows, including performances at Margate Pride, the Popworld Festival, and Manchester's Via, along with Steps' headline set at Brighton Pride – their only UK show of the year.

Will there be a headline solo tour too? "I hope so," she grins. "I feel like it's something that the fans will want to see live, because there's so much that we could do with it. I think it would be amazing. My favourite thing is touring and performing - it's what we do it for - so fingers crossed!"

There's an irony that, 25 years into her career, Claire - who, in the past, has had no reservations in sharing her longing for a day when Steps finally tone down their high-energy performances - is out here, on her own terms, with one of the most energised projects of her career to date.

It's symbolic of a new mindset, partly from age and also the recent recognition of the group's legacy, that sees her embracing life and living in the moment. "With age there's a bit more of a 'fuck it' kind of attitude," she says with a twinkle in her eyes. "We're here to have fun and to entertain people - and if we look like we're having fun, I think that really translates to the audience. It just makes everybody feel so much better, because what's the point if you're not enjoying it?" **RP**

● ***'Euphoria' is out August 25 on Demon.***

PHOTOS JOSEPH SINCLAIR

CHAPTER AND VERSE

As she heads into her fifth chapter with new music and her massive '50' tour, **Beverley Knight** gets candid on her exciting new era!

WORDS SIMON BUTTON

Most female pop stars prefer not to draw attention to their ages - but Beverley Knight isn't one of them.

Looking and sounding absolutely fabulous at 50, the Queen of British Soul is celebrating her milestone birthday with a brand new album, 'The Fifth Chapter', ahead of her '50' tour in October and November, marking her biggest run of live shows to date.

As she embarks on a bold new chapter in her decades-spanning career, the multi-hyphenate opens up about embracing her age, learning from the past and leaping forward into an exciting future!

GET UP!

"I'm in an industry which has always frowned on women who get to this age. Christ, they frown on women who get to 35, let alone 50," scoffs the hitmaker. "It's like you're over or you're plateauing or you're falling off. This is an industry that has traditionally been crueller to people who are older but particularly to women."

Having celebrated her milestone birthday with an intimate show at London's Lafayette in March, she's going all-out heading into the tail end of 2023 and got fans buzzing with *Last One On My Mind*, the first taste of her new music.

"I'M LIKE, 'YOU CAN BE YOU EXACTLY AS YOU ARE. BE FUCKING BEAUTIFUL AND FABULOUS AND OWN IT.' WHO DECREED THAT AT 50 IT'S A WRAP FOR YOU?"

So much for playing down her age, but then as Knight defiantly declares: "So much of what is expected of a woman is to be forever young, forever useful, forever beautiful, whatever that means. But I'm like, 'You can be you exactly as you are. Be fucking beautiful and fabulous and own it.' Who decreed that at 50 it's a wrap for you?"

Bev, as she's affectionately known to friends and fans, sees Kylie Minogue as an inspiration. The latter is now 55 and Bev marvels: "I look at Kylie and I'm like, 'Look at that woman go!' When she released *Padam Padam*, radio stations were very hesitant about it and they didn't really want to get behind that song. Then, of course, the fabulous gay community was like, 'Really?', and they came out like an army to support that woman. I look at Kylie and I just think, 'She's leading the march and I'm here for it!'"

"I LOOK AT KYLIE AND I JUST THINK, 'SHE'S LEADING THE MARCH AND I'M HERE FOR IT!'"

A soul singer extraordinaire, not to mention musical theatre star and TV talent show panellist, the MBE (for services to British music) and national treasure has no intention of slowing down. When we chat over Zoom she's in a park, dressed in workout gear, having just done a session of hill sprints, and there's not even a hint of sweat or breathlessness.

The new album is her first in seven years, after 2016's 'Soulsville'. It would have been here sooner: "But then a pandemic got in the way and I didn't want to put out a lockdown album. I wanted to put out an album that was joyous and I wasn't going to do that in the middle of a pandemic. So I thought, 'You know what, I'll wait. It's already been a little while so what's a couple more years?' And I'm glad I waited because it seems like this sound is good for now."

She's right about that. 'The Fifth Chapter' is an exuberant blast of funk, soul, R&B, gospel and disco. This time the woman who co-wrote the likes of *Made It Back*, *Greatest Day* and *Keep This Fire Burning* left the songwriting to such sought-after names as Diane Warren, Seb Coe and Andrew Roachford whilst performing in 'The Drifters Girl', 'Sister Act' and 'Sylvia' on stage and serving on the 'Starstruck' panel on TV.

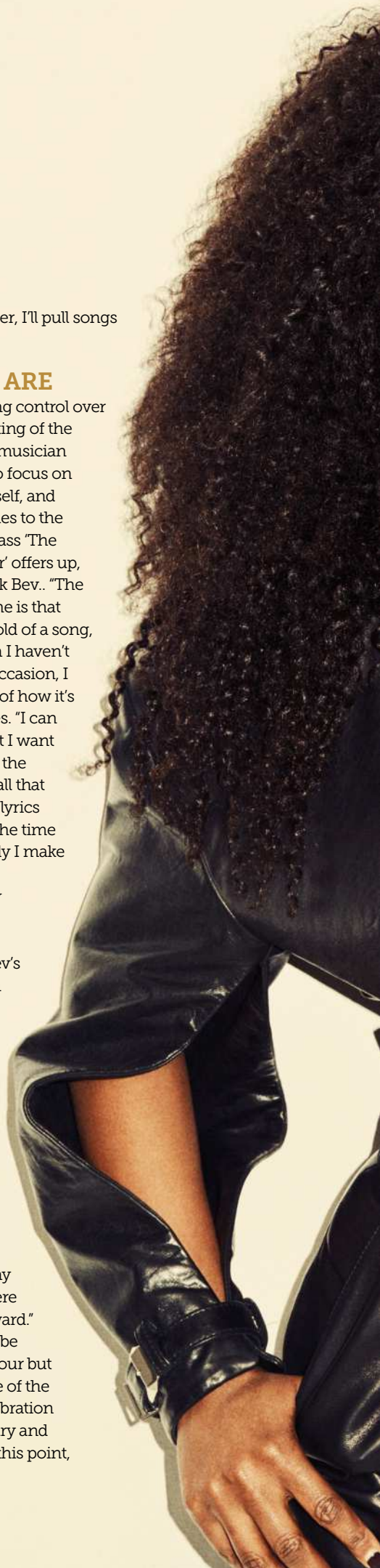
"I've been so busy that if I'd been writing the songs myself I don't think I would have given enough attention to them," Bev explains. "When I'm writing I need to really drill down and spend time, especially with the lyrics and getting everything right. So I was like, 'I don't need to prove anything in terms of who I am as a songwriter, I'll pull songs in instead'."

AS YOU ARE

Relinquishing control over the songwriting of the LP gave the musician more time to focus on the music itself, and when it comes to the sound and sass 'The Fifth Chapter' offers up, it's trademark Bev.. "The thing with me is that once I get hold of a song, even though I haven't written it on this occasion, I can see the vision of how it's gonna work for me," she smiles. "I can see the production value, what I want to do vocally on it, where I see the background vocals lining up, all that kind of stuff. Even though the lyrics and melody are not mine, by the time they've come through my body I make them my own."

Lead single *Last One On My Mind*, which is all about a guy who's got to go, couldn't be further from her own truth. Bev's happily married to production technician James O'Keefe: "But I can definitely relate to it in terms of understanding relationships, how they work and how if they're not serving you you've got to walk away and put them to the back of your mind. I've made some pretty substantial changes recently, not in that kind of brutal, sassy way. But I made some personnel changes in my team and it was hard. They were painful but I had to move forward."

Some of the new songs will be featured on the forthcoming tour but they won't be the driving force of the shows. "I want this to be a celebration of me reaching my half-century and everything that has led me to this point,



but also looking at now and the future. So yes, I will have a few of the new songs in there but never without the classics."

Wolverhampton-born Bev began writing songs when she was just 13 years old, performed in local clubs, recorded her first album on an independent label when she was 22 and, two years later, signed with EMI subsidiary Parlophone. Top 20 success eluded her until *Greatest Day* reached No. 14 in 1999 and she recalls: "It was tough at first. I still look back on it with fondness and joy but it wasn't easy. It was challenging because I first came into a scene which was absolutely Britpop-obsessed and I was the antithesis of that."

> **"I FEEL AS THOUGH THE BIG TAKE-OFF THAT EVERYBODY IS HOPING FOR ME IS RIGHT HERE NOW. IT'S READY TO GO AND READY TO HAPPEN."**

She was serving up soul while the likes of Blur, Oasis, Radiohead and the Charlatans were making so-called 'proper music'. "You know: lads, guitars, shoe-gazing... And there's me - female, Black, certainly not shoe-gazing, making music that seemed to sit at a polar opposite. But I just had to keep forging that path for myself and saying, 'The world will come round to where I am eventually', which it did but very, very slowly.

"But I have no complaints because I had some great fun on the way and I got to learn and hone my craft

> I WANT THIS TO BE A CELEBRATION OF ME REACHING MY HALF-CENTURY AND EVERYTHING THAT HAS LED ME TO THIS POINT

while the spotlight was on all these great bands."

GREATEST DAY

Knight's first album, 'The B-Funk' (1995), stalled at No. 145 and 'Prodigal Sista' (1998) hovered outside the Top 40, but 'Who I Am' (2002) - featuring the almighty *Shoulda Woulda Coulda* - was a No. 7 smash. Given that world-class voice, not to mention her style and undeniable charm, it's baffling that Knight never conquered America. "But it wasn't for the lack of want," she admits. "It was more about circumstances coming into play."

Shoulda Woulda Coulda shoulda been a Stateside hit. But, she reflects: "There was so much goodwill and it was such a positive time, but record labels all over the place and EMI in particular was being investigated for, shall we say, misappropriation of funds and there were divisions being closed down. There was a lot of industry political upheaval and I was told that it wasn't the right time."

I'm expecting a sigh but instead she smiles. "I have to think, 'If EMI had sent me to the States at that time and it had all gone wonderfully well, what kind of artist would I be now? Would it have gone well for me? Would I have turned into a bitch of a woman?' There's always reasons why these things don't happen and, actually, I don't believe, hand on heart, that I was ready. Maybe talent-wise it was all there but I don't think I was really ready for what it would take and what it needed from me. And had it happened, would I have had this wonderful parallel career in musical theatre? Perhaps not."

America's loss has been musical theatre's gain. Whilst continuing to put out music, Bev has also dazzled on stage after she made her West End debut in 'The Bodyguard' in 2013. Was following in Whitney Houston's vocal footsteps daunting? Not for someone who sang along to the diva as a teenager and who performed *The Greatest Love Of All* in school assembly.

"I wasn't worried about singing the songs. I was more concerned about the challenge of singing them night after night after night. The most daunting thing, though, was the acting side of it. I grafted and I worked hard with an acting coach because I wanted to make sure that when I stepped on that stage people were like, 'OK, she's not faking it, she's actually really good'."

"IF I'D MADE IT IN THE STATES, WOULD IT HAVE GONE WELL FOR ME OR WOULD I HAVE TURNED INTO A BITCH OF A WOMAN?"

'Memphis' earned her an Olivier nomination and 'Sylvia' bagged her a Best Supporting Actress trophy - and she had a ball doing 'Sister Act' last year, so much so that she's returning to it in 2024. "I'd never been in a show before where I get to comedy and say funny one-liners," she grins. "I got to learn something new and I was opposite one of the funniest women ever. I was so lucky that I had Jennifer Saunders to learn from about timing and phrasing and the technical aspects of being funny."

There's no talk yet of a new series of 'Starstruck' but Knight loves being on the panel, offering: "It's great because the prerequisite is that the contestants have to be able to sing. You can't take on the great singers of this world without having a great voice yourself. So it's not a matter of me decrying people's average-sounding voices. Instead I get to talk about how close they are in sounding like the person they're trying to emulate and to explain to the public what it is about that artist that makes them unique." She adds: "For someone like me who likes to talk a lot and to talk about singers in particular, it's brilliant!"

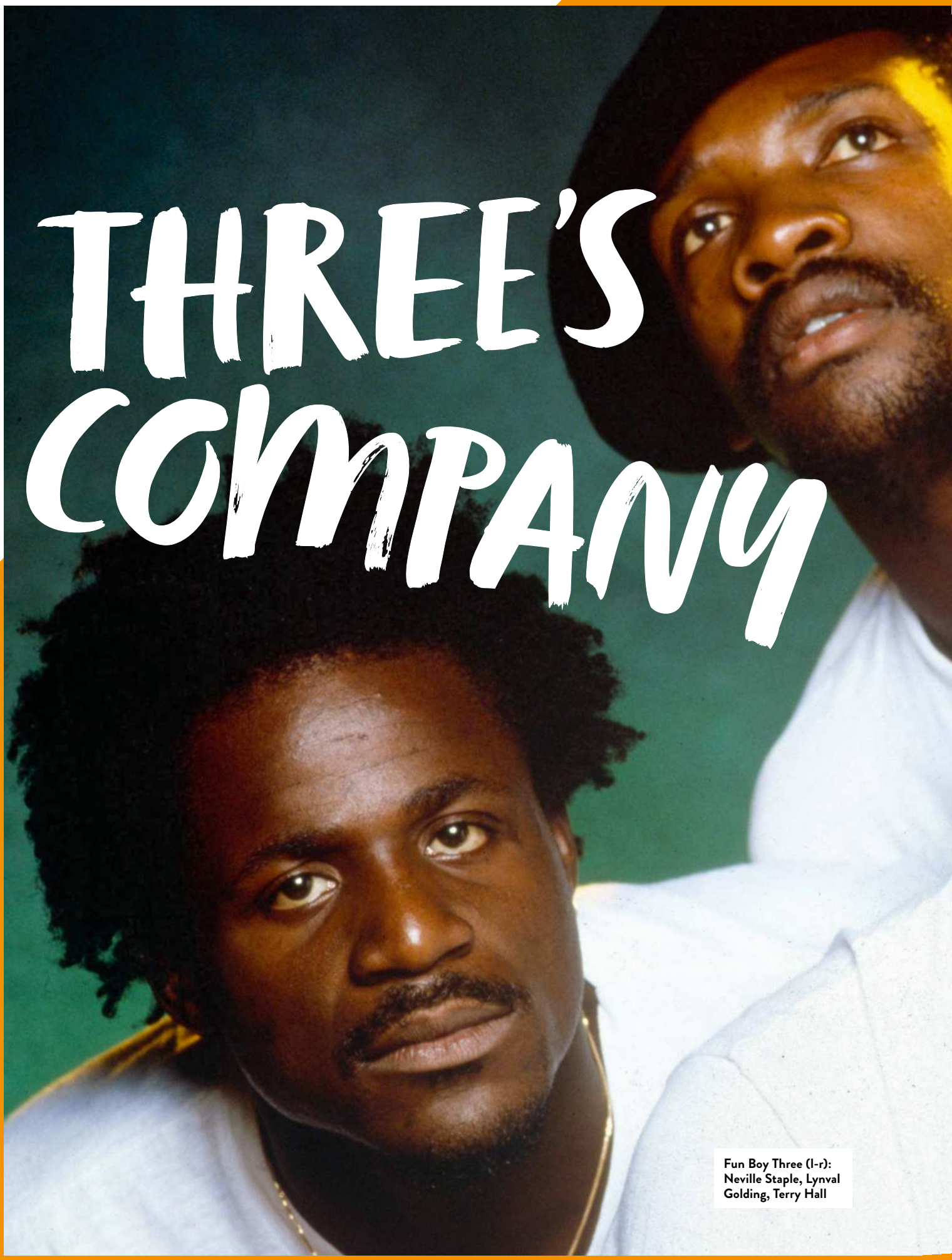
As for entering the fifth chapter of her life, she couldn't be happier. "This is the most settled and optimistic I've ever felt. I'm a joyful person naturally and it takes a lot to get me down, so I'm naturally that person who is always looking up."

She raises her head and beams: "But now I feel like I'm looking into the stratosphere. I feel as though the big take-off that everybody, God bless them, is hoping for me is right here now. It's ready to go and ready to happen. I've never felt so sure of it and I've got a great collection of songs with which to do it." **RP**

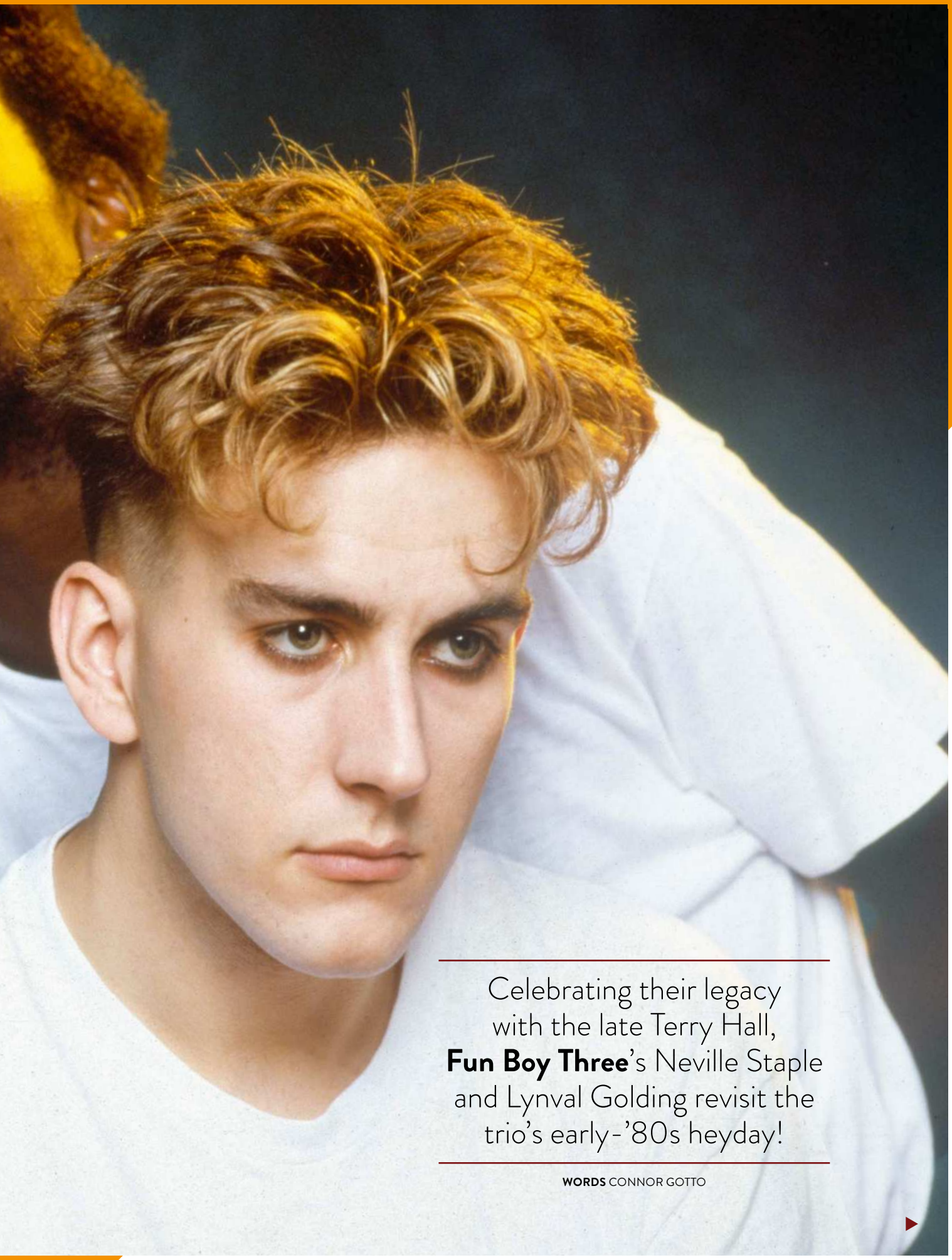
'The Fifth Chapter' is out on September 29 on Tag8/BMG. The '50' tour kicks off at Reading Hexagon on October 17, before which she'll appear as part of BBC Radio 2 In The Park on September 16.

PHOTOS JULIAN BROAD

THREE'S COMPANY



Fun Boy Three (l-r): Neville Staple, Lynval Golding, Terry Hall



Celebrating their legacy with the late Terry Hall, **Fun Boy Three**'s Neville Staple and Lynval Golding revisit the trio's early-'80s heyday!

WORDS CONNOR GOTTO

In the ever-changing music industry, few would be so bold as to leave a band on the back of its first No. 1 and attempt to launch a whole new act, but for Neville Staple, Lynval Golding and the late Terry Hall it was a risk that paid off.

When The Specials' standalone 1981 single *Ghost Town* rocketed to the top of the UK charts, the band's vocalist, guitarist and percussionist walked away amid growing discontent within the line-up and established a new group set to dominate the charts: Fun Boy Three.

Making their Top 20 debut later that year with *The Lunatics (Have Taken Over the Asylum)*, the band went on to achieve seven hit singles from two LPs - 'The Fun Boy Three' (1982) and 'Waiting' (1983) - a legacy its surviving members sit down to revisit, four decades later.

JUST DO IT

"There are some things I remember so clearly, but most times I can't even remember what happened last night," laughs Lynval, discussing the events of 40+ years ago that led to them exiting one of the most successful 2 tone groups ever and forming their own trio.

Ahead of the 45th anniversary of that group's eponymous debut album next year, he's taken part in a number of retrospective projects that have brought back "painful" memories of the "ups and downs" of success. It was one such low that led to the dissolution of the original line-up after just two albums, due to growing discontentment within the band.

"There was conflict because Jerry [Dammers, keyboards] wanted to go one way and we wanted to stick with the sound of the first album, because it was too soon to change - but he wouldn't listen," recalls Neville. "So we parted ways and how we got the Fun Boy Three going I don't even know! We went into the studio and we didn't know what the hell we were going to do; if you listen to that first album, it's all percussion!"

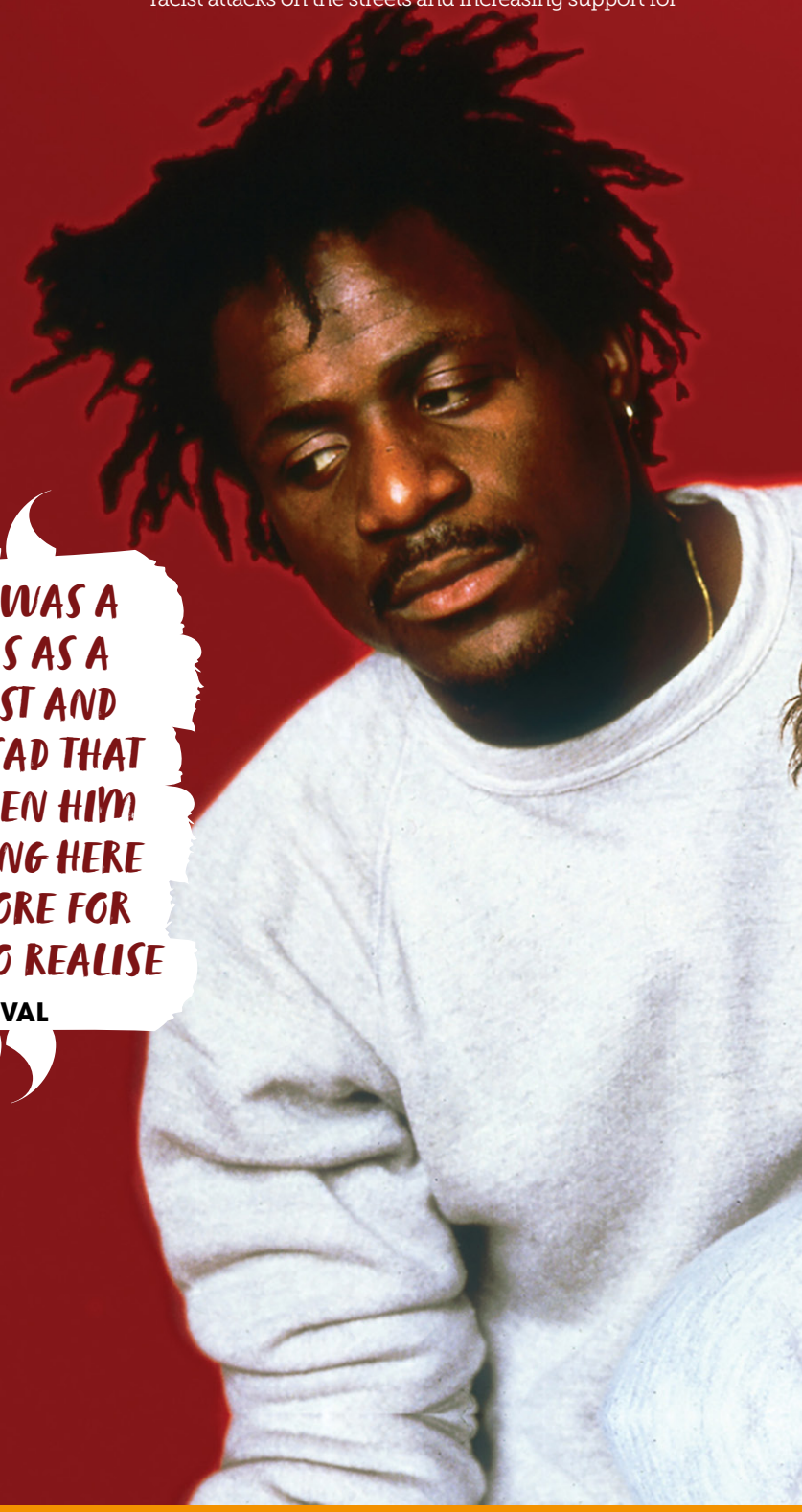
Their coming together happened almost five years before Fun Boy Three launched, when Lynval joined local musician Ray King's band, Pharaoh's Kingdom, as a guitarist and began to play alongside Jerry.

"We played with them for a while and one day he said to me, 'I've got some ideas, would you like to come and listen to them?'," he shares. "So we went down to his house, which was a two-minute walk from The Pilot pub in Bradford, where we were playing, and he showed us these ideas that merged all these different styles."

Quitting Pharaoh's Kingdom, Jerry and Lynval formed a new group, first called the Automatics then the Coventry Automatics, in 1977 and were joined by Tim Strickland (vocals), Silverton Hutchinson (drums) and Horace Parker (bass). Tim was replaced by Terry soon thereafter and the following year, Neville and Roddy Byers (guitar) joined the line-up, laying the foundations for one of the most influential acts to emerge at the time.

Arriving in the wake of the punk movement, The Specials' politically-charged lyrics were a reflection on the cultural landscape of the time. "We were the voice of the Rock Against Racism generation," insists Lynval of the initiative, which emerged in reaction to a rise in racist attacks on the streets and increasing support for

> TERRY WAS A GENIUS AS A LYRICIST AND IT'S SO SAD THAT IT'S TAKEN HIM NOT BEING HERE ANYMORE FOR PEOPLE TO REALISE
>
> **LYNVAL**



the far-right National Front. "We would see it and we sang those songs, because that's what we wanted to say. We just opened our mouths and the words came out.

"I got beaten up in fights and it's evil, but the way I see it is that through the evilness I educated a generation. Now, through the Internet a lot of young people know about these things and have access to all of that information, and if that makes being against racism trendy then it's a wonderful trend to have."

WAY ON DOWN

Released in the summer of '81, *Ghost Town* spent three weeks at No. 1 and a total of 11 weeks in the Top 40, becoming the biggest hit of the band's career while, behind the scenes, the group was falling apart. When it came to the trio's departure, nothing was certain. "I didn't think we were going to be successful, if I'm honest," admits Neville.

"When we left, it wasn't a case of, 'Are we going to be big again?', because you don't think like that. It was just a case of leaving that part of my life and starting something else - and we didn't even know what we were going to do..."

Co-produced with Dave Jordan, the debut album from Fun Boy Three was preceded by the new band's first single, *The Lunatics (Have Taken Over the Asylum)*; a reflection on Britain's Conservative government, led by Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, at the time.

"That was meant to be the natural follow-up to *Ghost Town* and it still stands up to this day. Terry was a genius as a lyricist and it's so sad that it's taken him not being here anymore for people to realise that he's one of the best writers to come out of England," insists Lynval. "But *Luntacs* hasn't aged; it's just passed on from generation to generation, and just look at the lunatics of this generation - they're *crazy*!"

If their first hit showed promise, its follow-up launched Fun Boy Three even further up the charts, ▶

group: Bananarama. Months prior, Sara Dallin, Keren Woodward and Siobhan Fahey scraped into the Top 100 with their debut single, *Aie A Mwana*, but write-ups in the fashion press caught Terry's attention and he recruited the teen trio to perform on his up-and-coming group's first long-player.

Their collaborative single, a cover of the 1930s jazz tune *'Tain't What You Do (It's the Way That You Do It)*, gave both groups their first Top 5 hit, with the follow-up, a new version of The Velvelettes' *Really Saying Something*, achieving similar success. Neville remembers: "We didn't expect to work with them as such - we just needed some girl backing vocals. But Terry saw them and thought it would be a good change, so we tried it.

"All of the Fun Boy Three stuff - on the first album especially - we didn't have any idea what we were trying to do! It all just evolved, including the thing with Bananarama," he adds, with the group eventually featuring on an additional two album tracks: *Sanctuary* and *Alone*.

It wasn't just in the studio they had a good time together. "We went to Amsterdam with Bananarama and had such an amazing time - but man, those girls could drink," laughs Lynval. "We were just drinking and drinking and drinking, and I don't even remember most of it except that we had a wonderful time. I really enjoyed that period with the girls."

That's not to understate their role in helping launch one of the most successful girl groups of all time. "Working with them was just natural; we did a lot of shows together and I think they found it a bit strange to begin with, because they weren't used to it, but I made a point to keep an eye on them and make sure they were OK, because it was all new for them," smiles Neville. "So we helped them find their feet, because you have to remember they didn't know anything about music, but they really got going after they worked with Fun Boy Three."

> "I CAN SEE NOW, LISTENING BACK, THAT WE WERE YEARS AHEAD WITH WHAT WE WERE DOING"
> **NEVILLE**

SANCTUARY

From their first album, the group landed further hits with *The Telephone Always Rings* and a cover of George Gershwin's *Summertime*, but when embarking on their second LP the trio joined forces with Talking Heads leader David Byrne for a collection that was considerably more polished than their initial outing.

"The second album was a bit more thought out and you can hear the difference," insists Neville. "But that was because we knew what we were doing - it wasn't a case of wanting to be bigger. Nowadays, artists are begging for No. 1 albums but for us that meant nothing because we were thinking about the music. If you're focussed on the music because that's the part you love, you're not worrying about where it ends up on the charts."

'Waiting' proved another success for the band and earned them a further pair of Top 10 hits, this time with *The Tunnel Of Love* and the classic *Our Lips Are Sealed*, which was co-written by Terry and Jane Wiedlin, and originally a US smash for The Go-Go's a year prior. Reflecting on Fun Boy Three's success in relation to The Specials, Lynval draws comparisons with Blur and Damon Albarn's other project, Gorillaz.

"If there's one guy that I really respect it's Damon Albarn and if you look at what he's done with Gorillaz compared to what we did with Fun Boy Three, it makes sense," he reflects. "We were on an extended break away from The Specials and our publishers gave us some money to go in the studio and do whatever we wanted to do, which is when we really became Fun Boy Three."

By the summer of 1983, the trio were peaking in popularity when Terry disbanded the group, going on to form the Colour Field with ex-Swinging Cats members Toby Lyons and Karl Shale - a move Neville only discovered while on holiday in Jamaica.

"That's when I found out Fun Boy Three had split," he confesses. "Somebody called me and said, 'Oh, I didn't know you'd split', and I said, 'What?' It had already been on the news and I didn't even know.

"It would have been great to do a third album with Fun Boy Three. It would have been great to do a third album with The Specials. But when other people are involved, you just never know," he adds, maintaining that he's proud looking back on their output. "They're both brilliant albums and I can see now, listening back, that we were years ahead with what we were doing. A lot of people didn't take it like that with Fun Boy Three, but it was a great time for us to change and try new things and make a different kind of music.

Back in 2008, The Specials reunited for a 30th anniversary tour, with Neville playing with the band until 2012 and Lynval and Terry continuing to the latter's death, recording the 2019 LP, 'Encore', together. And looking to the future, the guitarist is keen to continue to celebrate his late friend's legacy.

"We were never the sort of band that the tabloids went after, but now it's important because, as far as I'm concerned, I have to make sure that the legacy of Terry Hall continues and people know his story," he shares. "Two years ago I had spinal cord surgery and I still can't use my hands, so I can't play guitar, but I've already done my work. I've been blessed to be able to work with two amazing musicians in Jerry Dammers and Terry Hall - the best lyricist ever. So I feel like a winner, like I won the biggest jackpot ever!" **RP**

● ***'The Complete Fun Boy Three' is out August 4 on Chrysalis.***

PHOTOS BRIAN ARIS

WELL, FANCY THAT!

Throughout his career, Terry Hall channelled his frustrations at the state of the world into his lyrics, but alongside his more socially conscious critiques the vastly underrated songwriter also opened up personally about his own experiences.

One of the most prominent examples of such, the Fun Boy Three album track *Well, Fancy That*, is a particularly harrowing narrative that recounts the sexual abuse the musician experienced when, at the age of 12, he was abducted and delivered to a paedophile ring in France.

The trauma resulted in him being medicated throughout his teens and led to a battle with depression and manic depression, with Lynval praising his late friend and bandmate for "opening doors" and allowing others to speak openly about their similar experiences.

"During The Specials, people would say, 'Terry's so quiet', but we had no idea," he admits. "So when he told me and if you listen to the words of that song, you realise it was a lifetime thing for him and when you've had that kind of trauma, there are going to be things that will trigger it.

"Remember, this was at the time when people like Jimmy Saville were molesting children and nothing was being done about it. And they just filled Terry up with valium," he adds. "But him coming out and saying what he said was a wonderful thing, because it encouraged people to speak out and go and seek help and look after their mental health."

While his experiences plagued him throughout the years, Lynval says the camaraderie within the group offered Terry a support system and a band of brothers that looked out for him throughout the highs and lows.

"I worked with him all those years and I could look at him in his eyes and know, 'We're going to have a bad day today'," he admits. "He never knew I was keeping an eye on him that closely, but I always knew what was going on."

Lynval adds: "That's why my role now is to tell the story of Terry Hall, because no one knew Terry like I did."

> THE INTRODUCTION TO OUR FRIENDSHIP WAS THROUGH MUSIC, SO OUR CONNECTION WAS OUT OF THAT PURE LOVE
>
> AINO

BACK TO THE BEAT

Icona Pop (l-r): Aino Jawo and Caroline Hjelt

A decade after releasing their debut album, **Icona Pop** return with 'Club Romantech' and reveal how motherhood and a global pandemic lured them back into the studio!

WORDS CONNOR GOTTO

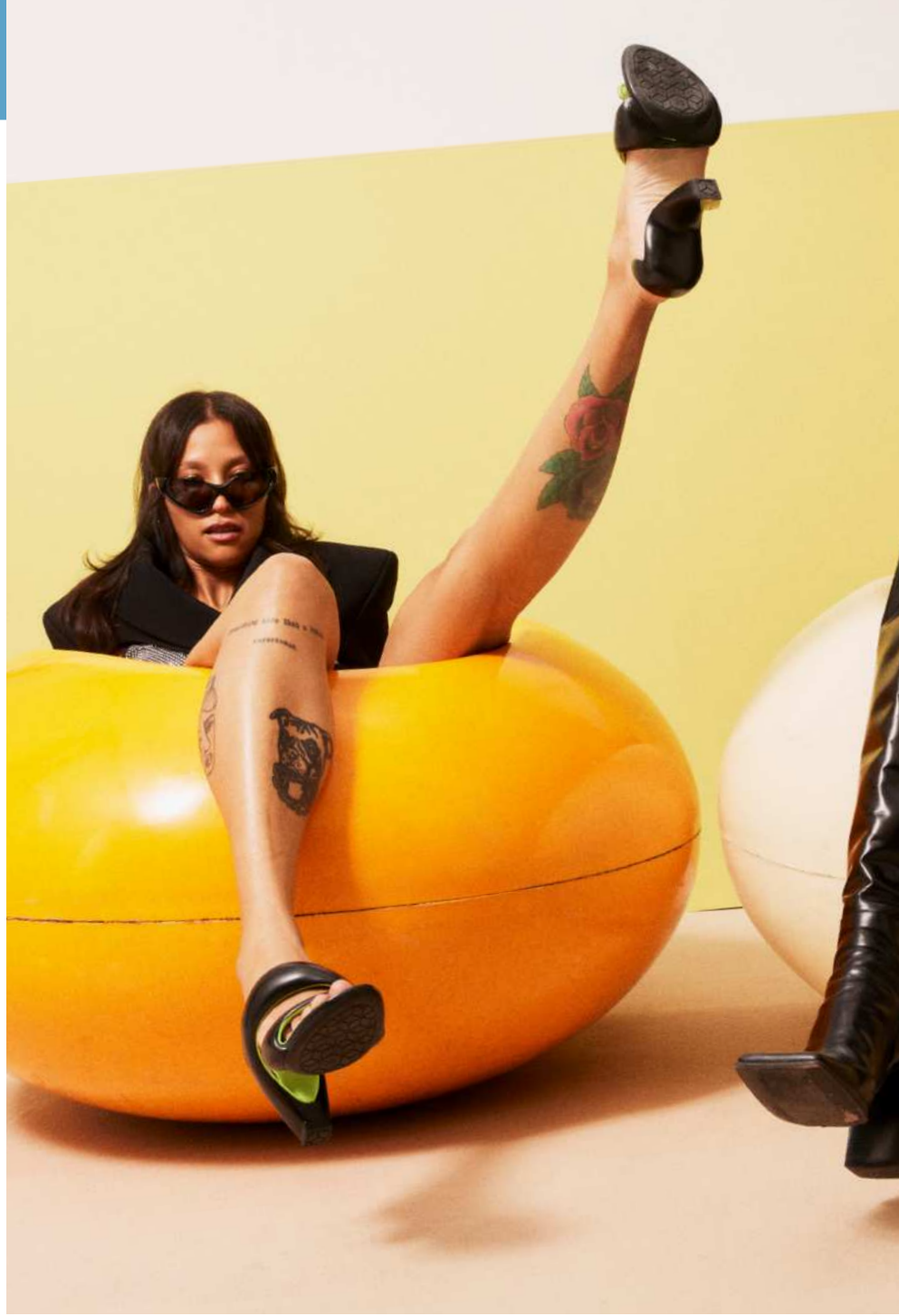
The world of pop can be a fickle place and after landing one of the biggest anthems of the summer, most artists would be quick to churn out album after album and keep up the momentum.

Not Icona Pop; the Swedish duo, who topped the charts worldwide with their Charli XCX collaboration, *I Love It*, released their first and only album a decade ago and although they've toured extensively in the time since, they've yet to follow it up - until now.

Ahead of the release of their second LP, 'Club Romantech', Caroline Hjelt and Aino Jawo discuss their long-awaited new material and reveal how two girls from Stockholm's chance encounter led to a musical partnership that took the world by storm.

STOCKHOLM

"We knew each other because we went to the same music school, but we weren't in the same class and we didn't hang out," says Caroline. "Aino was doing her thing with her band and I always thought she was cool, and I was doing a lot of different things but nothing was happening."



Career-wise, they may have been at a standstill but there was one thing Caroline had perfected: how to throw an epic party! "One of our mutual friends was like, 'You know Aino from school? She's really heartbroken - we should invite her.' So I said, 'Great, let's force her to come because she needs this energy', and right when she stepped in the door I was like, 'Where have you been all my life?' It was like falling in love..."

The bash lasted all night and during the early hours they talked about writing together - "That's something you say but it doesn't usually happen," Caroline laughs - but soon after they reconnected and wrote their first two songs together. "It was weird because it was so quick," says Aino. "The introduction to our friendship was through music, which is different because our connection was out of that pure love, which is something you can't force."

Energised by the meeting of minds, it wasn't long before they booked their first gig and set about writing enough material to fill an hour-long set. "And we also improvised a lot," grins Caroline, as Aino remembers the show as a full-circle moment because the guy who caused the heartbreak that led her to Caroline was in the crowd. "It was like 'fuck you'," she laughs, "but its crazy how you can meet a person and it will completely change your world..."

And change their world did; as they continued to work together on material for their first release, Caroline and Aino's vision soon became global and the pair jetted to London where they made roots and began networking with the hottest producers and collaborators. "Stockholm is small and it's great for writing music, but we were always dreaming of going abroad and we started working with people over in England," admits Caroline. "So we took the opportunity and were like, 'Let's go there. We want to explore!'"

Aino adds: "Also, we love British music and for us at that time, it was so easy to just jump over there. But there were a lot of ups and downs and we were so poor. We didn't have any money. But it started another type of creative process; we didn't have a studio to go to, so we sat in our room and wrote music. It was beautiful chaos."

At the time, they lived with two roommates, including pre-fame Oscar-winning Swedish actress Alicia Vikander, who remains one of their "best friends". "She was here doing a film and we were like, 'Let's move in together', and we were here for two years," says Aino.

"We talk a lot about that beautiful time we had in London, because we were all in the same place together, just before it started to happen for real," adds Caroline.

FASTER

To most, Icona Pop seemed like an overnight success when *I Love It* topped the UK charts back in June 2013, but the track was originally released over a year prior and it becoming a hit was the result of the duo taking each and every opportunity to plug the single.

It's life on the road that kept them busy up until 2020, when lockdown forced them off the stage and back into the studio, when after putting it off for years they finally committed to writing and recording what became 'Club Romantech'.

"We actually started to write it just before we left LA," reveals Aino. "We'd been touring for so many years and even though we tried to write music, it never really happened that much, so when we got back to Sweden is when we really got into it."

Totalling 15 tracks, the album features the singles *I Want You*, *Faster* and *Where Do We Go From Here* and boasts collaborations with Joel Corry, Ultra Naté and Galantis. "We have some amazing people on there," Aino smiles.

"We've been working with this producer called Yaro, who's been doing most of the songs, and he's just awesome."

Also included is rising Swedish star Yaeger, who features on the single *Shit We Do For Love*. "She's super cool and a great artist," beams Caroline, with Aino agreeing: "We've been writing a lot with her and we were like, 'Do you want to join us on the album?' We wrote this song while we were on the road together and I think she's gonna become big because she's so good!"

The pandemic may have been a launchpad for creativity but it wasn't the only change in their lives, with Caroline and Aino both becoming first-time mums and getting to grips with babies while working on their "clubbiest songs ever".

PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

"You kind of have to shift. You shift perspective when you become a mum and things that have been super important to you aren't as important anymore," insists Aino. "That also takes off the pressure to make the best album in the world; personally, I think we made the best album in the world, but it gives you freedom because you realise that you're not the most important person in the room anymore.

"As an artist, you have quite a big ego and now suddenly, you have to start to think in a totally different way. So it has been super important for our creative perspective, because we started to write much better music after taking off the pressure.

Caroline adds: "I think I also started making better decisions. I was listening to my gut again; before I could be pretty anxious and would sit up all night over one decision, like, 'Maybe I should call them again? Or should I not?' But now I'm like, 'This is my final answer', and it's pretty cool, because I do feel more confident after becoming a mum. I also feel like, because we talked about it before actually having babies, we didn't know how we would feel about Icona Pop - like, would it still be a priority? And yes, it is.

"I love being a mum and it's the best thing in the world, but Icona Pop is my second baby and my sweet escape. So having both things actually works very well - it's my dream life!"

> **WE'RE MORE IN CHARGE THIS TIME AND WE'RE DOING IT OUR WAY, WHICH IS VERY EMPOWERING!**
>
> **CAROLINE**

FREE

Ahead of the release, there's a sense of déjà vu for the duo that hasn't been felt in 10 years, but reflecting on a journey between albums that took many twists and turns, Caroline maintains that everything turned out right.

"We were supposed to release an album before lockdown but then that didn't happen and I'm very happy about it, because so much changed in our sound and that actually gave us the time to really figure it out," she reflects. "And also, we're ready to tell a story again, because releasing singles is great but it's just songs, whereas with an album everyone can find their favourite and it's more about inviting people into our world."

That doesn't necessarily mean they're more prepared for what's to come. "In one way, we're still super naive and I'm just like, 'Fuck yeah, let's do this!'," she laughs. "It's almost like we started a band yesterday and we have this 'we're gonna show them' kind of attitude.

"But in another way, I feel like we've grown so much and after being in the business for 12 years, we know so much more and we know how we want to do things. We're more in charge this time and we're doing it our way, which is very empowering."

That regaining of control came hand in hand with Covid; when Caroline and Aino's touring schedule was derailed, they steered their career back on track and took the reins, tapping into the creative process that made them fall in love with music in the first place.

"I think this album has so many cool songs that are really different and you never know what the songs will become," muses Aino. "The climate of music is so different; before people bought physical CDs, but now they're listening on Spotify which means, one week later, they're onto the next thing, so it's hard for a song to become that huge now. But, I feel like I'm ready for that challenge..."

"Yeah, me too," beams Caroline. "I'm like, 'Let's do this!' I also feel that with a song like *I Love It*, we worked that song really hard and so many people said that it was too weird to be on radio - like 'It doesn't have any verses, what the fuck?!' But that made us realise that anything is possible and you never know what will happen. You just have to put out music that you love and we love the music on this album!" **RP**

● ***'Club Romantech' is out September 1 on Ultra Records.***

(RE)INTRODUCING...

LUCY SPRAGGAN

A decade since her 'X Factor' debut and seven albums into her career, **Lucy Spraggan** gets personal with her new LP and first-ever memoir, and in doing so finally finds balance...

"I wanted to remind everybody where I came from and that song has been following me around for a decade," says singer-songwriter Lucy Spraggan of *Everything Changes (Beer Fear Pt. II)*, the opening song on her seventh studio album, 'Balance'.

The track begins with a sample of her 2012 Top 20 hit, *Last Night (Beer Fear)*, which began to climb the charts after she performed it at a packed EventCity in Manchester and received a pass to the Bootcamp round of 'The X Factor' from judges Gary Barlow, Mel B, Tulisa and Louis Walsh, and would have peaked even higher had a rule change on the show not led to its removal from digital outlets.

During her run on the ITV institution, she made it through to the Live Finals but withdrew from the competition ahead of the fifth show, despite being heralded as a favourite to win. That didn't harm her chances, however, and she went on to sign a record deal with Columbia for her major label debut, 'Join The Club' (2013).

"The funny thing is, I wrote that first Top 10 album *before* 'The X Factor'," Lucy laughs. "It was just me writing in my bedroom and I've gone back to that, actually, because that's what I like doing. On all of the albums in between, I was trying to write songs because it was my job, but this album - like 'Join The Club' - was made out of joy."

Creating the album was an "organic process" and ran in parallel with Lucy writing her first memoir, 'Process: Finding My Way Through', which tackles the "the vicious impact of trauma across a lifetime" and offers "an exposé of the toxic underbelly of noughties celebrity culture and reality TV".

> Everything intersects; you can actually read the book while listening to the record, because it's all chronological!

"I've been writing the book for two and a half years and actually, the music was separate," she admits, going on to reflect on the thematic similarities between both projects. "I didn't really think about it, but maybe it's because I was evoking all these feelings [when I was writing the book] that I thought, 'Yeah, I'll write [songs] about that'. But everything intersects; you can read the book while listening to the record, because it's all chronological."

From life as a touring musician, to body image and mental health, 'Balance' sees Lucy open up like never before. One of the most candid tracks, *OCD*, tells of receiving a working diagnosis of Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder and coming to terms with its implications.

But in the time since, she's come to accept that may not be the case at all. "I think the working diagnosis was wrong," offers the musician. "I've done an autism assessment since, I'm doing an ADHD assessment, which is where they have pigeonholed me in. It was a GP that said, "If you're obsessive over things and you're hyper-focussed then it sounds like OCD," but the more research I've done and the more I've looked into it, I don't think that is what I have. I think I'm neuro diverse and my neurodiversity makes me the creative person that I am. So that hyperfocus and that obsession is probably the reason I'm still having a career in music."

There's also a song about late TV personality, Caroline Flack; the former host of 'The Xtra Factor' who took her own life in 2020 after receiving a hounding from the media amid a domestic court case. "I really struggled with that one," Lucy admits of the track, *Caroline*. "The idea of writing about someone that's not here anymore... And I knew Caroline from my time on the show, but I thought about that song a lot."

On the impact her death had on attitudes towards the effects of media coverage and online abuse via social media, Lucy adds: "Whether you knew her or not - and she was the same person off screen as she was on TV - we were all spectators and I think that's why it hit everybody in the way that it did."

Beginning over two years ago, 'Balance' was originally on a different

path before Lucy travelled to Ireland and enjoyed a writing session so much that she switched producers and started over. "Recording albums can be a little bit corporate sometimes," she shares, "but then I went to Ireland and I wrote a song with Steve Garrigan from Kodaline and a producer out there [Philip Magee] and I was like, 'Oh, my God - I am recording my album with you!'"

Released independently on her label, Ctrl Records, partnered with Simon Cowell's publishing arm, Syco, Lucy insists the music mogul has been taking an active role in recording sessions. "It's just excellent," beams the singer who, despite rising to prominence on his TV show, had never worked directly with Simon until now. "It's a real team effort. He'll say, 'Can we get some more strings', then someone else will be like, 'I think it should be faster'... So it really feels like the old music industry before it got ruined! I'm trying to get Simon into a writing session, actually, because I really want him to come in and have a say on what he thinks sounds good."

It's a full-circle moment for the star, who's been through the major label system, dusted herself off and climbed back to the top of the industry as an independent artist, with five Top 20 albums under her belt and a career over which she has complete control.

Over a decade since her 'X Factor' debut, the title, 'Balance', perfectly embodies the place she finds herself in today, both professionally and personally, with its artwork reflective of her current position. "The song *Balance* is one of my favourites from the album and I wanted the artwork to reflect the fact that I'm thinking a lot about balance at the moment, with that sort of yin and yang image," she smiles, calling the black and white-themed shots "one of [her] favourite covers".

With the book and record coinciding with one another, it feels like a pivotal moment in Lucy's career so far and, looking to the future, she teases there are "special" plans on the horizon for 2024. "I always have a grand plan," the hitmaker giggles. "We're putting together something really quite special for next year which, if you stretch your imagination far enough and think of someone that's had seven albums, you can probably guess what's coming next... So that's our plan and we're going to do some really special stuff with it." **RP**

● ***'Process: Finding My Way Through' is out now on Blink Publishing. 'Balance' is out August 11 on Ctrl Records.***

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

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RELEASE RADAR

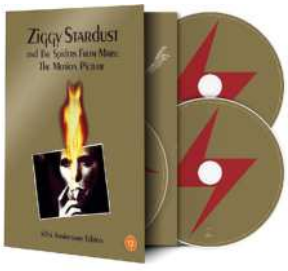
ALBUMS | REISSUES | COMPILATIONS

78 DRAMA QUEEN

Idina Menzel indulges her disco diva fantasy

78 ALBUMS

Claire Richards, Soft Cell, Liam Gallagher, Idina Menzel, Jungle, Public Image Ltd., Icona Pop



83 REISSUES & COMPILATIONS

David Bowie, Erasure, Lisa Scott-Lee, Shania Twain, Belinda Carlisle, London Boys, Jimmy Somerville, ABC, Fun Boy Three, The Human League, RuPaul, Paul Hardcastle

88 LIVE

Take That, Gwen Stefani, Bruce Springsteen, Lana Del Rey, Sugababes, P!nk, The Chicks, Will Young, Father John Misty, Jack Savoretti, The Human League, Sophie Ellis-Bextor

RATINGS EXPLAINED: ★★★★★ BRILLIANT ★★★★☆ STRONG ★★★☆☆ GOOD ★★☆☆☆ AVERAGE ★☆☆☆☆ POOR

PHOTOS STEVEN GOMILLION; DAVE HOGAN / HOGAN MEDIA

RELEASE RADAR

ALBUMS | REISSUES | COMPILATIONS

CLAIRE RICHARDS
EUPHORIA
★★★★☆

RELEASED: **August 25 *Demon***
FORMATS: **CD, Deluxe CD, 1LP Marble Vinyl, 2LP Light Blue / Neon Magenta Vinyl, Cassette**

Riding the wave of nostalgia brought about by Steps' 25th anniversary celebrations, Claire Richards honours the divas that helped hone her craft on her second solo album, 'Euphoria'.

Opening with the title song - a cover of Eurovision record-breaker Loreen's 2012 winning single - complete with an extended intro a la Steps' legendary live shows, it sets the scene for a collection that places Claire front and centre and sees the vocal powerhouse at the top of her game.

With each track reworked by producer-extraordinaire Steve Anderson (who, incidentally, is musical director for Steps and Claire's live shows, along with the likes of Kylie Minogue and Delta Goodrem), classics like Kim Wilde's *Never Trust A Stranger*, Laura Brannigan's *Gloria* and and Whitney Houston's *So Emotional* are spruced up for today's audience while maintaining the authenticity of the originals and a nod to the innate nostalgia running through the record.

Lead single, a dance reworking of Celine Dion's 2002 ballad, *I Surrender*, is the perfect example of such, while a cool remake of Cher's *Song For The Lonely* and synth-pop rendition of the ABBA classic *Summer Night City*, featuring Erasure's Andy Bell, are immediate highlights.

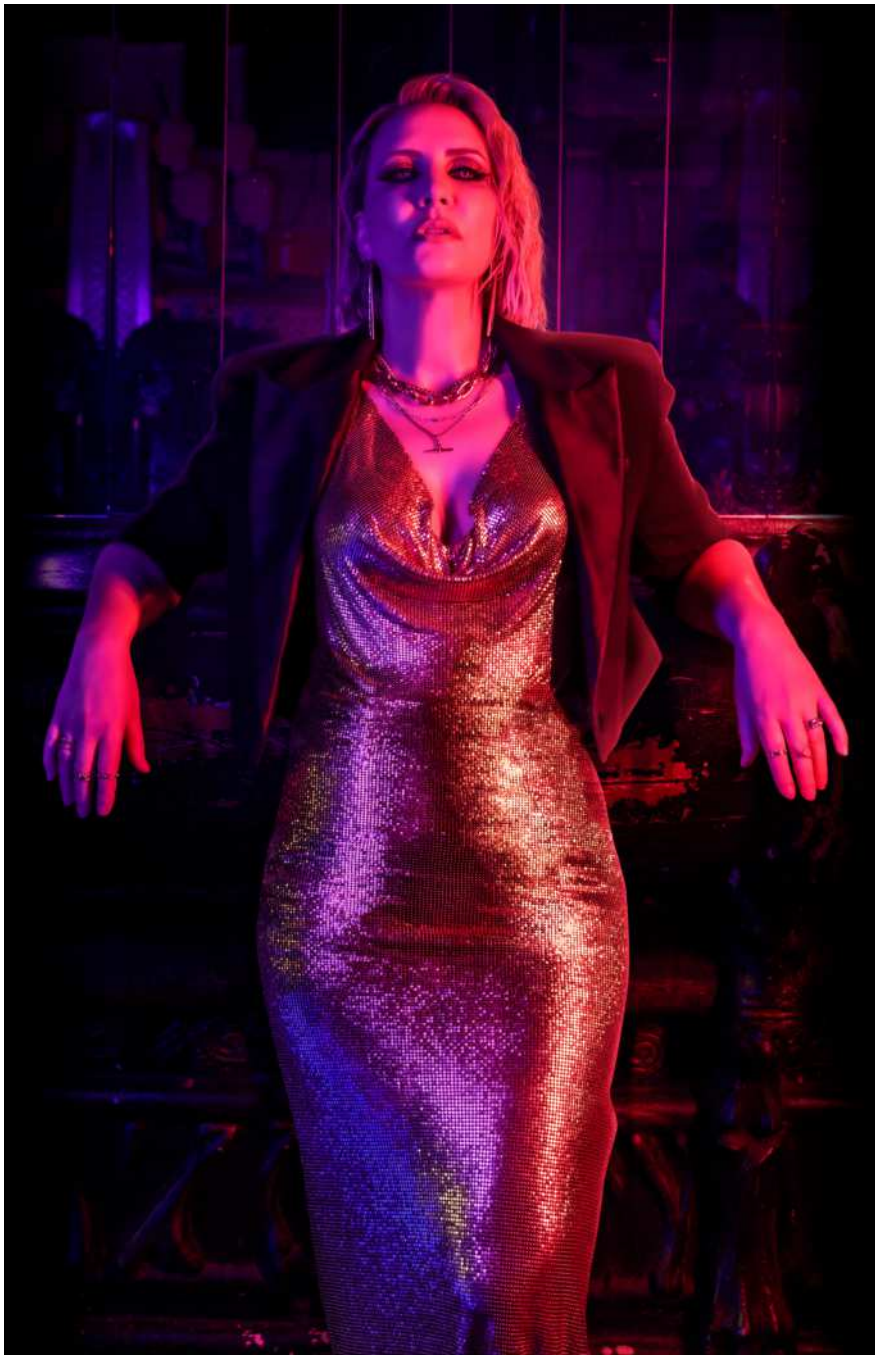


PHOTO JOSEPH SINCLAIR

As is the vocal extravaganza resulting from Claire and Delta taking on the roles of Barbra Streisand and Donna Summer on the disco classic *(No More Tears) Enough Is Enough*, which showcases the singer - almost three decades into her recording career - as one of Britain's finest voices.

From impassioned, soulful takes on Stephanie Mills' *Never Knew Love Like This Before* and The Carpenters' *Goodbye To Love*, to the unadulterated joy of pop gems like Donna Summer's *This Time I Know It's For Real* and Olivia Newton-John's *Xanadu* - and the fierce edge of Pat Benatar's *Love Is A Battlefield* - 'Euphoria' encompasses a spectrum of pop over which Claire retains complete control.

But behind the music is a singer just looking to have a good time. "Every single song is a banger – listening to this album just makes me feel good," she says. "I want everyone to whack it on before they go out and get themselves completely in the zone of having a good time".

We couldn't have put it better ourselves.

SOFT CELL
*HAPPINESS NOW COMPLETED / *HAPPINESS NOW EXTENDED
★★★★★

RELEASED: **July 28 *BMG***
FORMATS: **CD (Completed), 2LP Black Vinyl (Extended)**

A year on from its original release, Soft Cell revisit their Top 10 comeback LP, '*Happiness Not Included', with a bumper pair of releases that revive sessions from the duo's first record in two decades.

Marc Almond and Dave Ball's 2022 release explores the state of the world across 12 dystopian-leaning tracks, including the bleak *Heart Like Chernobyl* and the Pet Shop Boys collaboration, *Purple Zone*.

The result of Soft Cell's long-standing working practice of Ball recording backing tracks to 12" single length, before then editing them down to three or four minutes, is the sister project, '*Happiness Now Extended', which offers a fresh take on each song as it was originally intended and, in doing so, enables the material to breathe with a more consistent flow.

"Many of the '*Happiness Not Included' tracks were originally much longer, but Philip Larsen and I edited them so that they would fit onto a single vinyl LP," says Mark of the remixed - or rather pre-mixed - album. "Spreading them across two vinyl LPs means we can now include the full versions."

Meanwhile, a third counterpart, '*Happiness Now Completed', brings together B-sides, alternate takes and in-house remixes, along with 10 unreleased tracks from the original album sessions, giving the most comprehensive overview of their work yet.

Opening with a cover of *First Hand Experience In Second Hand Love*, originally recorded by Giorgio Moroder, the set is notably more upbeat than its parent album, while lyrically tackling typically Soft Cell themes, including relationship breakdowns (*Jukebox Head*), doomed romances (*You Kill Me*) and the judgements of society (*Defiant*).

Arguably more instant than some of the original album cuts, tunes like the pulsing *Strange Kinda Dance* highlight the duo's commercial edge, while a cover of X-Ray Spex's *The Day the World Turned Day-Glo* again sees them revamp a classic track with their signature sound.

Their omission from the original release is choice; some of these outtakes (all fully-formed and produced pop tracks) are as strong, if not moreso, than previously-released tracks, but thematically they don't quite fit the bill. It's that brutal approach to editing down the LP that made '*Happiness Not Included' so brilliantly slick and conceptually focussed, with the latest chapter in the story laying out various facets of the creative process that resulted in the final record.

Designed to sit alongside the original, 'Extended' and 'Completed' are superb additions to the wider universe of Soft Cell's fifth album and a testament to the prolific creativity that occurs when Dave and Mark enter the studio together - here's hoping there's even more on the horizon.

PHOTO ANDREW WHITTON

RELEASE RADAR

ALBUMS | REISSUES | COMPILATIONS

DEACON BLUE
ALL THE OLD 45s and YOU CAN HAVE IT ALL
★★★★★

RELEASED: **September 1**
Cooking Vinyl
FORMATS: **2CD, 2LP Black Vinyl, 2LP Yellow and Pink Vinyl, 14CD Box Set**

On the back of the 35th anniversary celebrations of their debut album, 'Raintown' (1987), Deacon Blue revisit on a lifetime of hits with their brand new best-of LP and comprehensive box set.

The Scottish group, fronted by Ricky Ross and Lorraine McIntosh, made waves with their first release and soared to new heights with its UK chart-topping follow-up, 'When the World Knows Your Name' (1988), paving the way for a career spanning decades.

Now they're diving back into the past, bringing together a lifetime of work including all the classics and their five albums since 2012, which marked their return to the Top 20 after two decades.

"We've added so many songs, albums and EPs which have become a strong part of Deacon Blue and our live repertoire," beams Ross. "It feels like the right time to celebrate that; to release something that's a true compilation of our music so far."

Offering their most comprehensive musical biography to date, the double-disc set, 'All The Old 45s', journeys chronologically through the group's biggest successes, boasting their highest-charting singles like *Real Gone Kid*, *I'll Never Fall In Love Again* and *Twist And Shout*, along with classics including *Dignity*, *Chocolate Girl* and *Wages Day*, and more recent tunes *The Hipsters* and *City Of Love*.

Meanwhile, the expansive 'You Can Have It All' collects the band's complete studio catalogue, along with two B-sides and rarities compilations and a stripped-back compendium of hits, live favourites and cover versions, 'Peace Will Come'.

"We really enjoyed playing our campfire sets on the last tour, when we deconstructed and rearranged songs to fit an acoustic format," adds Ross. "Essentially, 'Peace Will Come' is an extension of that concept. It's rough around the edges, but it captures the core of what we do. There are no overdubs or drops - we all just sang and played together and took the best take.

"It ended up being a vital artistic exercise for us. After we'd finished, I did think - 'Why have we never done this before?'"

Breathing new life into their best-loved recordings while offering cover versions such as Bob Dylan's *Forever Young* and Bruce Springsteen's *Dancing In The Dark*, it presents another side to a band that's become as successful on stage as they have in the charts.

Packaged with rare photos from over the years and extensive liner notes with new insights from all current members of Deacon Blue, it makes for an exemplary greatest hits package and a carefully-curated 'thank you' to fans from one of Scotland's greatest musical exports.

PHOTO CAMERON BRISBANE

PHOTO HAMISH BROWN

LIAM GALLAGHER
KNEBWORTH 22
★★★★☆

RELEASED: **August 11 *Warner***
FORMATS: **CD, Deluxe CD, 2LP Standard Black Vinyl, 2LP Limited Edition Sun Yellow Vinyl, 2LP Limited Edition Marble Vinyl (Artist Store Exclusive)**

Twenty-six years since Oasis' drew 250,000 people to Knebworth, Liam Gallagher makes a bold return to the iconic venue for a show documented on his new live record.

Captured in Toby L.'s documentary from the concerts that took place over the Queen's Jubilee weekend, and heralding the release of Liam's third solo album, 'C'mon You Know', the 16-song set celebrates his solo hits and, of course, the legacy that helped him and Noel rise to Britpop legend status.

Liam and his band are on fiery form throughout, blazing through the likes of *Shockwave* and *Everything's Electric* with a full-throttle intensity, while also showcasing the more reflective side of his voice in poignant moments such as *Once* and *Slide Away*.

Opening with *Hello*, the first song on the group's second album, '(What's the Story) Morning Glory?' (1995), and segueing into 'Definitely Maybe' (1994) single *Rock 'n' Roll Star*, the sound of the crowd is prominent across an LP that strives to create the complete Liam Gallagher experience for fans at home.

Solo tracks like 2017's *Wall Of Glass* and the recent singles *More Power* (complete with live choir) and *C'Mon You Know* feature prominently and shine light on his enduring creativity, three decades on from Oasis' debut, with the feat of packing out the venue a testament to his success as a solo artist.

But closing out the LP is a run of classics, with *Cigarettes & Alcohol* and *Some Might Say* building up to the iconic triple-hit of *Supersonic*, *Wonderwall* and *Champagne Supernova* - undoubtedly the highlight of an epic show and a treat for a new wave of fans who didn't get to witness Oasis live the first time around.

Sounding better than ever, Liam's in fine form vocally with a presence that commands attention and proves him as one of Britain's all-time greatest rock showmen, with a sustained energy that, for devout fans of the '90s icon and casual listeners alike, proves irresistible.

Live records can be hit and miss but 'Knebworth 22' is a stellar display from one of the premier rock stars of a generation - here's hoping those rumblings of an Oasis reunion mean a follow-up isn't far behind...

RELEASE RADAR

ALBUMS | REISSUES | COMPILATIONS

IDINA MENZEL
DRAMA QUEEN
★★★☆☆

RELEASED: **August 18 *BMG***
FORMATS: **CD, Standard Black Vinyl, Limited Edition Hot Pink Vinyl (Artist Store Exclusive)**

Broadway legend Idina Menzel turns up the disco heat and struts out onto the dance floor with her latest pop record, 'Drama Queen'.

The aptly-titled LP showcases a different side to the powerhouse vocalist, best known for her killer ballads and musical theatre classics, who this time around turns up the BPM and leans into influences from the '70s and '80s for a record that's intrinsically camp while, at times, unassumingly cool.

Of the project, the singer beams: "I am a Drama Queen... I'm dramatic and emotional and passionate. I love the stage and the spotlight. I love the attention and the roar of an audience. I have big feelings. I sing my ass off through tears of joy, heartbreak, anger, and sadness. This project is the most fun I've ever had writing and recording an album. I want everyone to move and sing with me and embrace their inner Drama Queen."

Opening track, lead single *Move*, is a fine example of such, as she declares *'Damn! / They can stop and stare / Damn! / Baby, I don't care'* over a funky, Chic-inspired bassline - with Nile Rodgers himself featuring on the disco-leaning *Paradise*.

Meanwhile, *Beast* touches on electro-pop territory while *Funny Kind Of Lonely* displays her vocal power over pulsing synths for one of several show-stopping moments. Another tune, closing song *Madison Hotel*, references classics like *No More Tears (Enough Is Enough)* and *I Am What I Am*, starting out stripped back and building with a stellar vocal delivery, before launching into a full-band extravaganza.

But the real heart of the record is the title song which, in addition to being a brilliant pop track, lays out Menzel's attitude to life, embracing her personality and addressing her critics directly, insisting: *'If you get it you get it / If you don't you don't / And if you can't quite see it / You never will / I'm so dramatic'*.

It's the perfect mantra from the performer who, decades into her career, is out here living her best life and doing things her way - and when it comes to 'Drama Queen', the music more than speaks for itself!

PHOTO STEVE GOMILLION

JUNGLE
VOLCANO
★★★★☆

RELEASED: **August 11 *Caiola***
FORMATS: **CD, Standard Black Vinyl, Limited Edition Orange Splatter Vinyl, Limited Edition Orange Splatter Vinyl (Retail Exclusive)**

Having simmered their way up the charts to a new peak of No. 3 with their most recent album, 2021's 'Loving In Stereo', UK duo Jungle embrace a more global sound on their much-anticipated follow-up, 'Volcano'.

Produced by the London-based act, starring Josh Lloyd-Watson and Tom McFarland, their fourth record showcases the pair's innovative and forward-thinking production, from intricate and complex beats to soaring synths and soulful melodies, for a body of work that's current yet innately timeless.

Opener *Us Against The World* is instantly indicative of their style, one of 14 bursts of funk-laced, disco-influenced joy across the set, which includes collaborations with the likes of Roots Manuva, Erick the Architect, Channel Tres and Bas.

Tres' track, *I've Been In Love*, is an immediate standout, along with *Candle Flame*, which juxtaposes '70s vibes with Erick's '90s-esque hip-hop.

"We wanted to create a song that was both personal and relatable, exploring the highs and lows of love and relationships in a way that was both poetic and authentic," they say of the latter track, which "represents everything we stand for as a band".

The palate of genres they explore across the record is exemplary; from the passionate soul of *Dominoes* to the Latin shuffle of *Every Night*, 'Volcanoes' touches on multiple influences that converge to form the Jungle sound.

It's a commitment that's not only helped them climb the charts but one that, across their latest offering, is comparable to electronic peers Daft Punk and Basement Jaxx, their influence shining through on the one hand, while Josh and Tom's own interpretations also present exciting new avenues.

A pioneering 21st century act, alongside Jungle's music are visuals that are perhaps their most ambitious yet, featuring their signature choreography while exploring the universe they have created up to this point, the fate of which unfurls with each release and brings their world to life in new ways.

At 14 songs clocking in largely under three minutes, 'Volcano' is unlike most records of its kind; shunning extended, meandering tracks in favour of short, sharp bursts of energy, Jungle navigate a spectrum of sounds with skill and push their creativity forward like never before.

PHOTO ARTHUR WILLI

RELEASE RADAR

ALBUMS | REISSUES | COMPILATIONS

LUCY SPRAGGAN
BALANCE
★★★★☆

RELEASED: **August 11 *Ctrl Records***
FORMATS: **CD, Standard Black Vinyl, Limited Edition White Vinyl, Cassette**

For her seventh studio album, Lucy Spraggan digs deep and gets candid about life over the past 10 years on her most personal work to date.

Arriving a decade after her major label debut, the LP was produced alongside the singer-songwriter's first-ever memoir and tackles a range of subjects, from personal struggles with body image and mental health, to the challenges of pursuing and maintaining a career in music, along with the scrutiny that comes with life in the public eye.

But in opening the LP, Lucy goes right back to the beginning with a throwback reference to *Last Night (Beer Fear)* - the song that made her a household name after she performed it on 'The X Factor' stage in 2012. Aptly-titled *Everything Changes (Beer Fear Pt. II)*, the accompanying song sees her *'letting go'* of the past and stepping into a more positive future.

With a linear narrative running throughout, Lucy touches on various topics close to her heart, from the personal experience of being diagnosed with Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder and accepting her own mental health battles (*OCD*), to the breakdown of a drug-involved relationship (*Cocaine*) and overcoming imposter syndrome to embrace and enjoy her success (*Underdog*).

It's a personal journey played out in song and although far from plain sailing - title song *Balance* sees her *'Sleeping in an empty bed / I'm gonna leave my ex on read / Listen to what my therapist said'* - one that treads a path to where she stands today as an artist.

Among the 14 tracks are also cultural moments that lean into events of the past 10 years that have impacted and altered the social landscape, such as the death of TV presenter Caroline Flack after hounding from the media (*Caroline*), along with uplifting sentiments that nod to an artist who, on the back of a mega launchpad, has worked tirelessly to craft a career in her own vision (*Empire*).

Closing the record in the present day, the double hit of *Manchester* and *Cost Of Living* offer a glimpse at Lucy's life now; the first is a love letter to her adopted home city, with allusions to Oasis and talk of the *'wild North West'* in an ode to community and inclusivity, while the closing number nods to the post-Brexit British economy while ticking through the shared experience of being human in the 21st century.

In drawing on the process of putting pen to paper and writing her memoirs, Lucy not only celebrates the highs and lows of the past decade on an album that cuts to the core of her experience to date, but delivers her strongest, most finely crafted work of her career so far.

PHOTO JAMES NORTH

PUBLIC IMAGE LTD.
END OF THE WORLD
★★★☆☆

RELEASED: **August 11 *Cargo***
FORMATS: **CD, Standard Black Vinyl, Limited Edition White Vinyl (Retail Exclusive), Limited Edition Neon Green Vinyl (Artist Store Exclusive)**

Back with their first album in eight years, Public Image Ltd.'s 'End Of The World' is a bittersweet return for the post-punk group.

Coinciding with the band's 45th year, when they formed following frontman John Lydon's departure from Sex Pistols after just one album, the record was conceived during their 40th anniversary tour in 2018 and completed more recently when, post-pandemic, "there was just this massive explosion of ideas," Lydon says.

It's lead single, *Hawaii*, saw the group make a surprise bid for Eurovision glory as a contender for Ireland's 2023 entry, and while the track didn't make it through to the finals its significance runs deeper, serving as a tribute to the vocalist's late wife, Nora, who sadly passed away from Alzheimer's earlier this year.

The song sees John reflecting on their lifetime well spent and in particular, one of their happiest moments together in Hawaii. "Nora loved the album, she wouldn't have wanted us to postpone it or change any of our plans," he says, adding: "It is dedicated to everyone going through tough times on the journey of life, with the person they care for the most."

Now, they're pushing ahead with the release and 'End Of The World' showcases the group's range, with tender moments juxtaposed with typically PiL tracks, such as opener *Penge*, which is just the kind of overtly theatrical rock that's expected of the band.

The influences are many; *Car Chase* is a thriller set to music while *Being Stupid Again* leans into dance territory, and the stream of consciousness lyrics in *The Do That* are brilliantly absurd. Meanwhile, *Walls* goes back to the beginning for a post-punk anthem that's reassuringly familiar and sits comfortably in their catalogue.

Dive into a Public Image Ltd. album and you never know what to expect - 'End Of The World' is a fine example of that - but 13 tracks later their idiosyncrasy is contagious and the group's refusal to conform to whatever expectations and labels are forced onto them is in equal parts admirable and inspirational.

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

RELEASE RADAR

ALBUMS | REISSUES | COMPILATIONS

ICONA POP
CLUB ROMANTECH
★★★☆☆

RELEASED: **September 1 *Ultra Records***
FORMATS: **Digital Download**

A decade after finding international success with their dance-pop anthem, *I Love It (feat. Charli XCX)*, Swedish duo Icona Pop return with their long-awaited second album.

The club-ready collection clocks in at 15 tracks and boasts eight singles from the past three years, from 2020's *Feels In My Body* up to their most recent release, *Desire* with Joel Corry and Rain Radio, along with the epic Galantis collaboration, *I Want You*, and *You're Free* with the legendary Ultra Naté.

All similarly euphoric, the LP came about during a period of downtime for Icona Pop and was born of a hunger to get back on the dance floor and live life to the full.

"As Icona Pop, we can release a pop tune or a super hard dance song, and that's who we are," says Caroline Hjelt. "When we started to write this album, we didn't have any rules. We just had a vision we wanted to share with our fans. We're inviting them into our world."

Aino Jawo adds: "We put all of our problems and stress into what we're doing. We love disguising our heartbreaks and sadness in uplifting songs you can dance to. It was a very emotional process, and it's all in the music."

Opener *Fall In Love* captures the spark of love at first sight and ignites an explosion of dance floor beats that characterise 'Club Romantech', from the pulsing *Make Your Mind Up Babe* to house influences that backdrop *Loving You Ain't Easy* and Ibiza vibes on *Feels In My Body*.

A more mature club direction than the brash pop they're known for, its a record that doesn't veer too far from its central sound, although *Stockholm At Night* - an atmospheric anthem documenting a night out on the town and capturing the wonder of the Swedish capital - brings to the fore a soundscape that Icona Pop could and should explore further in the future.

Closing with *Spa Song* - the Sofi Tukker collaboration that harks back to the album's origins, when Caroline and Aino held virtual 'rave spa' sessions on Instagram Live during the pandemic - it's a full circle moment and a reminder of the circumstances that brought the duo back into the studio together, with the result a fireball of energy built up over the past decade.

PHOTO LAMIA KARIC

RELEASE RADAR

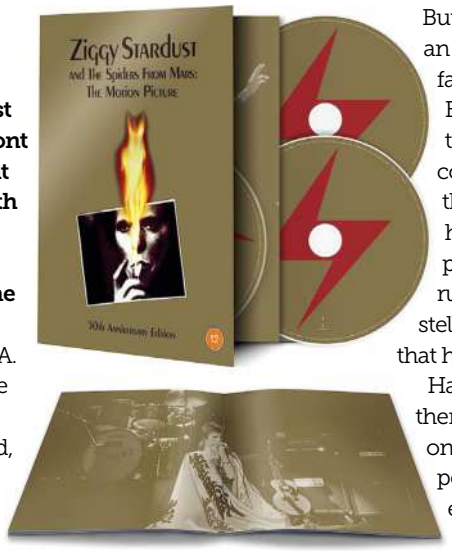
ALBUMS | **REISSUES** | COMPILATIONS

DAVID BOWIE
ZIGGY STARDUST AND THE SPIDERS FROM MARS
★★★★★
RELEASED: **August 11 *Rhino***
FORMATS: **2CD, 2CD+Blu-Ray, 2LP Gold Vinyl**

Revisiting the night David Bowie retired Ziggy Stardust, his most famous alter-ego, in front of 5,000 stunned fans at London's Hammersmith Odeon, the 50th anniversary re-release of the show captures the evening in all its glory.

Shot by filmmaker D.A. Pennebaker, the footage and audio has been restored and remastered, with both newly mixed by long-time Bowie collaborator Tony Visconti, with the medley of *The Jean Genie/Love Me Do* medley and *Round And Round* featuring the late legendary Jeff Beck reinstated.

The latter makes its first commercial appearance, while the release also captures the superstar's final speech prior to his encore, where he revealed it would be Ziggy's final outing, shocking both the audience and his own band.



But it was far from an emotional farewell with Bowie at the top of his game, commanding the stage with his legendary presence and running through a stellar set of anthems that hold up today.

Half a century later, there's no doubt it's one of his greatest performances ever.

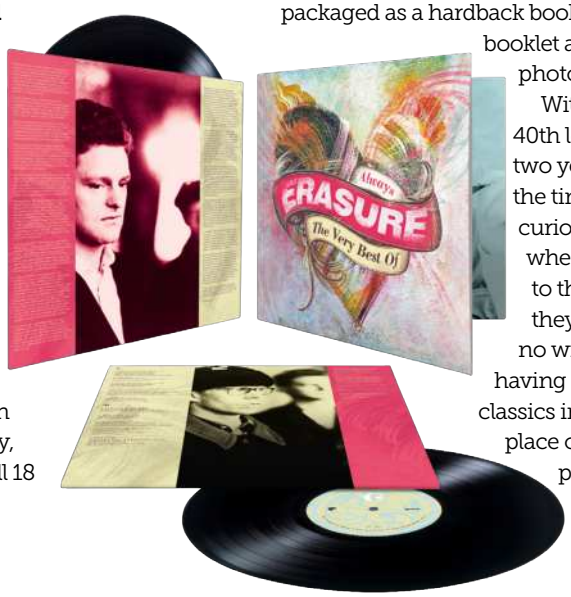
ERASURE
ALWAYS: THE VERY BEST OF ERASURE
★★★★☆
RELEASED: **August 18 *Mute***
FORMATS: **3CD, 2LP Black Vinyl**

The 2015 30th anniversary retrospective from Erasure is updated for an expanded reissue and its first release on vinyl.

The synth-pop duo's career-spanning release traces their journey from debut single *Who Needs Love Like That* through to the present day, encompassing all 18 studio albums.

Massive hits like *A Little Respect*, *Oh L'Amour* and *Sometimes* appear alongside three tracks released since the original record's arrival: *Elevation*, *Love You To The Sky* and *Hey Now (Think I Got A Feeling)*.

The showcase of Andy Bell and Vince Clarke's unfaltering output is accompanied on the CD edition by remixes from Moby, William Orbit, BT and The Grid (Dave Ball / Soft Cell), plus 4 brand new mixes, and packaged as a hardback book with a booklet and archive photographs.



With Erasure's 40th less than two years away, the timing is curious, but when it comes to the music they can do no wrong and having all the classics in one place on wax in particular is a huge plus.

LISA SCOTT-LEE
NEVER OR NOW
★★★★★
RELEASED: **August 18 *Plastic Pop***
FORMATS: **2CD, 2LP Orange Vinyl, 2LP Purple Vinyl, Cassette**

Of all the albums we predicted to receive a 20th anniversary reissue this year, Lisa Scott-Lee's first and only solo offering wasn't even on our radar.

But two decades after the Steps star dropped her debut single *Lately*, its parent album arrives with its first UK release across formats.

Also featuring the singles *Too Far Gone* and *Electric*, the 'Unleashed' edition contains the 13-song tracklist that finally made it out internationally in 2007 - four years after it was shelved - along with additional B-sides, remixes and unreleased recordings.

Among them, the much-sought-after Chicane collaboration *Burnt Out And Falling* is an electronic gem that lives up to the hype, while *U Sure Do* is a pop extravaganza and the ballad *No Other Day* shows off another side to Lisa's vocals.

Although her record releasing run was cut woefully short, 'Never Or Now' remains a strong pop album and, with the support of her label at the time, could have been a hit.

Thankfully, time has been kind to the album and here we are, in 2023, finally getting to enjoy it in all its glory, as it was intended, with a few added surprises along the way.

RELEASE RADAR

ALBUMS | **REISSUES** | COMPILATIONS

SHANIA TWAIN
COME ON OVER (DIAMOND EDITION)

★★★★☆

RELEASED: **August 25 *UMR***
FORMATS: **2CD Diamond Edition, 3CD Super Deluxe Diamond Edition, 2LP Black Vinyl International Diamond Edition, 2LP Blue Vinyl International Diamond Edition (Artist Store Exclusive), 3LP Ultra Clear Vinyl International Diamond Edition**

Twenty-five years after its initial release, Shania Twain's record-breaking third album, 'Come On Over', is the latest from her repertoire to get the 'diamond' treatment.

Boasting classic hits such as *Man! I Feel Like A Woman!*, *You're Still The One*, *That Don't Impress Me Much* and *From This Moment On*, the album is the top-selling country LP and the highest-sold album by a female artist of all time.

In celebration of its latest milestone and over 40 million global sales, the international version of the album has been remastered from the original tapes for the first time ever.

Featuring alternate mixes and artwork to the initial release, many of which better reflect the single versions of the tracks, the 16-song collection appears in its original configuration, along with an additional set of bonus content.

Included are live collaborative versions of several singles, with Elton John, Chris Martin and Backstreet Boys among the guest vocalists, along with a medley of *I'm Holdin' On To Love (To Save My Life)/That Don't Impress Me Much* and three remixes.

Although the bonus content itself is somewhat lacking, the reissue of the international release more than makes up for those shortcomings and, paired with gorgeous vinyl pressings across two and three discs, it's a hard one to resist

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BELINDA CARLISLE
DECADES VOLUME 1: THE STUDIO ALBUMS PART 1

★★★☆☆

RELEASED: **September 1 *Edsel***
FORMATS: **4CD Media Book**

Following on from Belinda Carlisle's worldwide 'Decades' tour, her first four solo albums are reissued as part of a new series of re-releases.

Documenting her rise to solo superstardom following The Go-Go's split, the four-disc set boasts 'Belinda' (1986), 'Heaven On Earth' (1987), 'Runaway Horses' (1989) and 'Live Your Life Be Free' (1991), with a run of 16 hit singles.

Included are *Heaven Is A Place On Earth*, *I Get Weak*, *Circle In The Sand*, *Leave A Light On*, *Summer Rain*, *(We Want) The Same Thing* and *Live Your Life Be Free*, all of which were Top 20 smashes in the UK.

Packaged in an A5 hardback book, the set also includes a 36-page booklet with all the lyrics and credits, plus annotation and photos, exploring the journey of her solo career in depth.

In recent years Belinda's albums have been reissued extensively on vinyl and while this release omits any additional content, such as B-sides and remixes, it's a neat way of documenting her career that will no doubt appeal to collectors.

And with her recent return to pop with 'Kismet', there sure to be a few more chapters left to write down the line...

LONDON BOYS
THE TWELVE COMMANDMENTS OF DANCE

★★★☆☆

RELEASED: **August *Maschina***
FORMATS: **Limited Edition Coloured Vinyl (Magenta, Orange, Purple)**

Ahead of its 35th anniversary, the debut album from London Boys returns to vinyl with a trio of reissues celebrating their most successful period.

The first release from the German-based English dance-pop duo reached No. 2 on the UK charts and stayed on the countdown for a massive 29 weeks, helped by a string of hit records including the Top 20 hits *Requiem*, *London Nights* and *Harlem Desire '89*.

Presented on magenta, orange, and purple pressings - the first time the LP has been released on wax since its initial run - the original tracklist features in full, with a direct replica of the classic album sleeve.

In recent years, 'The Twelve Commandments Of Dance' has been revisited on CD and with an expanded box set, but its revival with such a vibrant vinyl pressing feels apt for the joyous content.

Subsequent releases, 'Sweet Soul Music' (1991) and 'Love 4 Unity' (1993) failed to match the success of the duo's earliest work, and while the records themselves certainly capture a moment in time, what can't be denied is their charismatic delivery and the quality of the songs - all penned by Ralf René Maué - which remain strong pop classics.

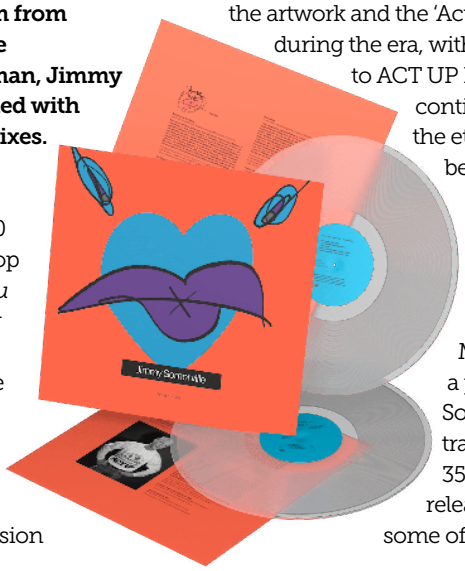
JIMMY SOMERVILLE
READ MY LIPS
★★★★☆
RELEASED: **September 1 *London***
FORMATS: **2CD, 1LP Blue Vinyl, 2LP Transparent Vinyl**

The debut solo album from Bronski Beat and The Communards frontman, Jimmy Somerville, is re-issued with rarities and new remixes.

Originally released in 1989, the album delivered three Top 30 hits - including the Top 10 Sylvester cover, *You Make Me Feel (Mighty Real)* - and enjoyed similar success on the Albums Chart.

Available on single and double vinyl, plus a double CD set, this expanded version contains remixes from William Orbit, AMYL, B-Sides, and rarities such as *From This Moment On* (from 'Red, Hot and Blue') and *I Believe in Love* (with Arthur Baker and The Beat Disciples).

In a neat nod to the coloured sleeves of the original release, each format has its own unique look, while his store boasts a collection of merchandise replicating the artwork and the 'Act Up' tee he wore during the era, with profits donated to ACT UP London, continuing to celebrate the ethos and drive behind the music.



Although not as successful as his work with the groups that came before, 'Read My Lips' played a pivotal role in Somerville's career trajectory and almost 35 years since its release, stands up as some of his very best work.

ABC
THE LEXICON OF LOVE
★★★★☆
RELEASED: **August 8 *EMI***
FORMATS: **1LP Black Vinyl, 4LP Black Vinyl+Blu-Ray**

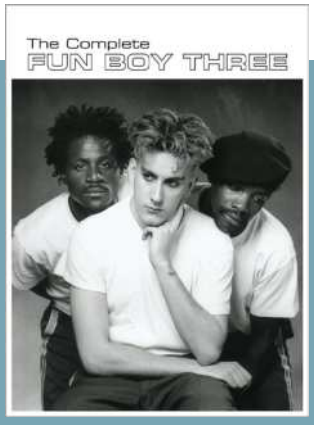
Few albums have had such an impact on an era as ABC's 'The Lexicon Of Love', which is celebrated with an expanded deep dive on the back of its 40th anniversary.

Launching the band and the production career of Trevor Horn, the chart-topping LP delivered four hit singles - *Tears Are Not Enough*, *Poison Arrow*, *The Look Of Love* and *All Of My Heart* - with the group's ambition to fuse punk and disco resulting in a wholly original sound.

Its anniversary reissue comes in the form of a Half Speed Mastered single vinyl edition, with a new clarity of sound that shines through on each recording, while a massive 4LP edition boasts additional rare tracks and concert performances never before on vinyl.

Meanwhile, there's a first time HD restoration on Blu-Ray of ABC's feature film, 'Mantrap', plus a brand new Atmos and 5.1 surround mix of the album (individual and continuous mix) by Steven Wilson, along with notes from Martin Fry himself.

Housed in a double-gatefold sleeve including outtakes of the cover photo session by Gered Mankowitz and arriving ahead of a UK tour celebrating the record, the fanfare is fitting for an all-time classic album.



FUN BOY THREE
THE COMPLETE FUN BOY THREE
★★★★★
RELEASED: **August 4 *Chrysalis***
FORMATS: **5CD+DVD**

Collecting their complete post-Specials work, the new box set from Fun Boy Three highlights the trio's influential pop at the very start of the '80s.

Terry Hall, Lynval Golding and Neville Staples left their former group amid disagreements on the band's direction and picked up where they left off with *The Lunatics (Have Taken Over The Asylum)*, before helping launch the career of Bananarama with a pair of hit collaborations.

Their self-titled debut is a more experimental affair from a group in limbo, unsure of their next move and living up to their name in the studio, while the involvement of Talking Heads frontman, David Byrne, gave follow-up, 'Waiting' (1983), a boost.

Included in this neat retrospective are 69 audio tracks, bringing together all the official recordings including B-sides, remixes, live songs and outtakes, while the 27-track DVD includes all their promo videos, 'Top Of The Pops' performances and a live concert from 1983.

Packaged in a DVD-sized hardback book with contributions from the band and photographs, it's a fitting tribute to the late Hall - who was involved in its curation prior to his passing - with the addition of coloured vinyl editions of each LP an added bonus.

Most of all, though, 'The Complete Fun Boy Three' is a reminder of the group's brilliance and commitment to making music that was unquestionably ahead of its time, and remains as relevant today.

RELEASE RADAR

ALBUMS | **REISSUES** | COMPILATIONS

THE HUMAN LEAGUE
SECRETS
★★★★☆
RELEASED: **August 11 *Demon***
FORMATS: **2CD, 2LP Black Vinyl, 2LP Half-Speed Master Black Vinyl**

The follow-up to their late-'90s greatest hits compilation, The Human League's 2001 LP 'Secrets' is back with a set of expanded reissues.

The line-up of Philip Oakey, Susan Sulley and Joanne Catherall recorded the record with keyboard player Neil Sutton, who co-wrote most of the songs with Oakey, and programmer David Beevers providing their sound.

It saw the band signed to Papillon Records but failed to live up to the success of previous releases ahead of the bankruptcy of the label, with many writing it off as a failure.

But two decades later, the LP features some of the band's best work, blending their classic sound with more contemporary electronic elements, with songs such as *Liar* and the single *All I Ever Wanted* immediate highlights.

For the reissue, the full album is presented along with the B-side, *Tranquility*, and remixes of *All I Ever Wanted*, *You'll Be Sorry* and *Love Me Madly?*.

Although not one of their better-known releases, 'Secrets' remains a quintessential LP in The Human League's catalogue and this reissue celebrates the music as it stands, timelessly brilliant.

RUPAUL
SUPERMODEL OF THE WORLD
★★★☆☆
RELEASED: **Mid-August *VMP***
FORMATS: **Red Marble Vinyl**

Before becoming a global phenomenon as the face of the 'Drag Race' franchise, RuPaul rose through the entertainment ranks and in 1993 released his first album, 'Supermodel Of The World'.

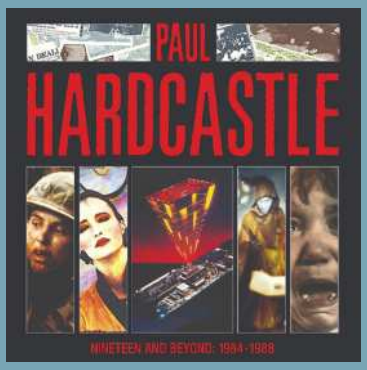
Taking him from New York club icon to household name, the LP was a roaring success thanks in part to lead single, *Supermodel (You Better Work)*, which peaked in the UK Top 40 and landed heavy rotation on MTV.

Following a picture disc reissue celebrating the 40th anniversary of the label that launched the LP, Tommy Boy, the album makes its latest appearance on wax courtesy of Vinyl Me, Please, on red marble vinyl and housed in a foil-stamped and numbered jacket.

Featuring the LP in its original configuration, this edition offers little that's new since its last release - although for those who favour traditional pressings over picture disc releases, it'll be a more tenable option.

In an era when the crossover between drag and pop has never been so strong and queens across the world are releasing material on a regular basis, it's easy to dismiss how groundbreaking RuPaul was back when he first started out.

Building on the success of Divine, who broke into the UK charts a decade earlier, RuPaul crossed into the mainstream on a global scale and 'Supermodel Of The World' is the launchpad that propelled the performer to where he is today.



PAUL HARDCASTLE
NINETEEN AND BEYOND: 1984-1988
★★★★★
RELEASED: **July 28 *Chrysalis***
FORMATS: **4CD**

In 1985, songwriter, musician and producer Paul Hardcastle had a surprise hit with *19*, launching a career that saw him become one of the most prolific artists of the past four decades.

The electronic protest single was pioneering in its use of samples and spoke out against the US' involvement in the Vietnam War, with the unlikely subject matter - coinciding with the 10th anniversary of the war's ending - launching it to the top of the charts.

It marked his debut on the Chrysalis label, which is now revisiting his two albums for the company with an expanded box set comprising 'Paul Hardcastle' (1985) and 'No Winners' (1988), along with a host of additional mixes and B-sides.

Both the 'Destruction Mix' and 'Final Story' versions of that song are included, along with the hits *Just For Money*, *Don't Waste My Time* and *The Wizard* - the famed 'Top Of The Pops' theme song.

Housed in a Clamshell box with the addition of a 24-page book featuring an interview with the musician reflecting on his commercial success, it's fine proof of Hardcastle's influence on late-'80s pop.

RELEASE RADAR

ALBUMS | REISSUES | **COMPILATIONS**

NOW THAT'S WHAT I CALL MUSIC! 115

★★★★☆

RELEASED: **July 28 Sony**

FORMATS: **2CD**

Eurovision's return to the UK and Kylie Minogue's climb back into the Top 10 are among the early highlights on the latest instalment of the NOW That's What I Call Music! series.

First, though, is *Miracle* from Ellie Goulding and Calvin Harris, which spent a massive eight weeks at No. 1, followed by another chart-topper from Lewis Capaldi with *Wish You The Best*.

Loreen's *Tattoo* and *Padam Padam* by Kylie lead into a run of pop anthems, including the first solo release from Little Mix star Leigh-Anne (*Don't Say Love*) and *Meltdown* from Niall Horan's latest album, 'The Show'.

Rising R&B trio FLO's Missy Elliott collaboration, *Fly Girl*, sits neatly alongside *Big Big Love* - the epic pop comeback from Belinda Carlisle - before Eurovision's Alessandra (*Queen Of Kings*), Käärijä (*Cha Cha Cha*) and Sam Ryder (*Fought & Lost* with Brian May) close out the first disc.

There's more Liverpool 2023 on CD2, with the UK's Mae Muller making her second appearance on NOW 115 with *I Wrote A Song*, alongside one of the biggest hits of the year, Miley Cyrus' *Flowers*, and Ed Sheeran's No. 1 *Eyes Closed*.

P!nk's *Trustfall*, Anne-Marie and Shania Twain's *Unhealthy*, and Rita Ora and Fatboy Slim's *Praising You* keep the pop party alive, along with Adam Lambert and Sigala's cover of Sylvester's *You Make Me Feel (Mighty Real)*, this year's Pride In London song.

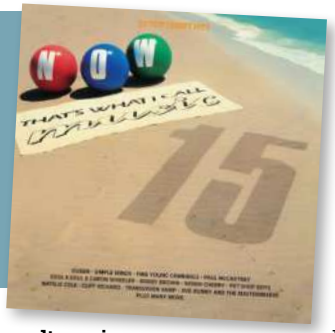
Penultimate track *Let The Sun Come In* from Pretenders leads into the Tina Turner classic, *The Best*, following her passing earlier this year, providing a fitting tribute to an artist whose impact is still felt in the charts today.

NOW THAT'S WHAT I CALL MUSIC! 15

★★★☆☆

RELEASED: **July 28 Sony**

FORMATS: **2CD**



Another reissue from the vaults arrives this month in the form of NOW 15, originally released back in 1989.

Across two discs are 31 of the biggest hits at the time, opening with the iconic *I Want It All* from Queen and boasting classics from Transvision Vamp (*Baby I Don't Care*), Neneh Cherry (*Manchild*) and Gladys Knight (*Licence To Kill*).

Rooms On Fire, the biggest UK hit of Stevie Nicks' solo career, is high in the running, along with Holly Johnson's solo classic, *Americanos*, and *The Look* from Roxette. Johnson, along with Paul McCartney, appears twice on the compilation, with both featuring alongside The Christians, Gerry Marsden and Stock Aitken Waterman on *Ferry 'Cross The Mersey*.

Lifted from their third album, 'Introspective', *It's Alright* by Pet Shop Boys appears in 7" form, leading into *Swing The Mood*, the first single from Jive Bunny and the Mastermixers, followed up shortly by Bananarama's New Jack Swing '89 version of *Cruel Summer*.

Along with classics like *Back To Life* from Soul II Soul & Caron Wheeler and De La Soul's *Say No Go*, it foreshadows the path of the charts into the next decade and beyond.

As with previous reissues, NOW 15 remains faithful to the original release without any additional content, but for collectors and completists it's a neat nugget of history from the legendary series.

NOW THAT'S WHAT I CALL USA: THE 80S

★★★★☆

RELEASED: **August 11 Sony**

FORMATS: **4CD, 3LP Red, White & Blue Vinyl**

Collecting a decade of hits that defined the US charts, the 1980s is the focus of this whistle-stop compilation through the years.

It's no surprise that a rocker like Bon Jovi's *Livin' On A Prayer* opens the set, kickstarting a run of hits from Bruce Springsteen (*Hungry Heart*), Pat Benatar (*Love Is A Battlefield*) and Rick Springfield (*Jessie's Girl*), showcasing the sound that dominated the Hot 100.

But it's not all guitar-heavy anthems, with pop staples such as Tina Turner's solo breakthrough *What's Love Got To Do With It*, Diana Ross' disco romp *Upside Down* and Olivia Newton-John's *Physical*, along with and movie soundtrack moments like Irena Cara's *Flashdance... What A Feeling* and *Ghostbusters* from Ray Parker Jr., also making an appearance.

A collection of songs that were big in the US rather than tunes by American artists, Culture Club's Top 10 Hot 100 hit, *I'll Tumble 4 Ya*, features alongside A Flock Of Seagulls' *I Ran (So Far Away)*, spotlighting UK acts that enjoyed global success.

Meanwhile, tracks like Paula Abdul's *Cold Hearted* and Whitney Houston's *You Give Good Love* - neither of which made it big in the UK - are ccelebrated for their Stateside appeal.

That's not to say there aren't universal hits aplenty, with The Bangles' *Walk Like An Egyptian*, Survivor's *Eye Of The Tiger* and John Waite's *Missing You* among the obvious highlights.

Slowing things down with a mid tempo run that culminates with Foreigner's *Waiting For A Girl Like You*, it rounds out a varied collection that captures the essence of the '80s from coast to coast.

CAUGHT live

BST HYDE PARK

TAKE THAT
SATURDAY, JULY 1, 2023
★★★★★

More than three decades into their career, Take That have no trouble selling out venues, but the promise of the trio's only major UK headline show of the year had fans flocking in their tens of thousands to Hyde Park for the one-off spectacle.

And they didn't disappoint; arriving on stage at 8.50 to 2010 single *The Flood*, Gary Barlow, Mark Owen and Howard Donald were backed by an elaborate troupe of dancers who brought the scene to life from the get-go.

Delivering an 18-song set, Gary, Mark and Howard jumped between eras, performing 2014 single *These Days* - their first as a trio - before launching into a crowd-pleasing rendition of their Barry Manilow cover, *Could It Be Magic*.

Piano ballad *A Million Love Songs* and the Bee Gees cover *How Deep Is Your Love* were among the many singalong moments, while renditions of *Pray*, *Back For Good* and *Never Forget* delivered nostalgia and a reminder of the sheer strength of their catalogue.

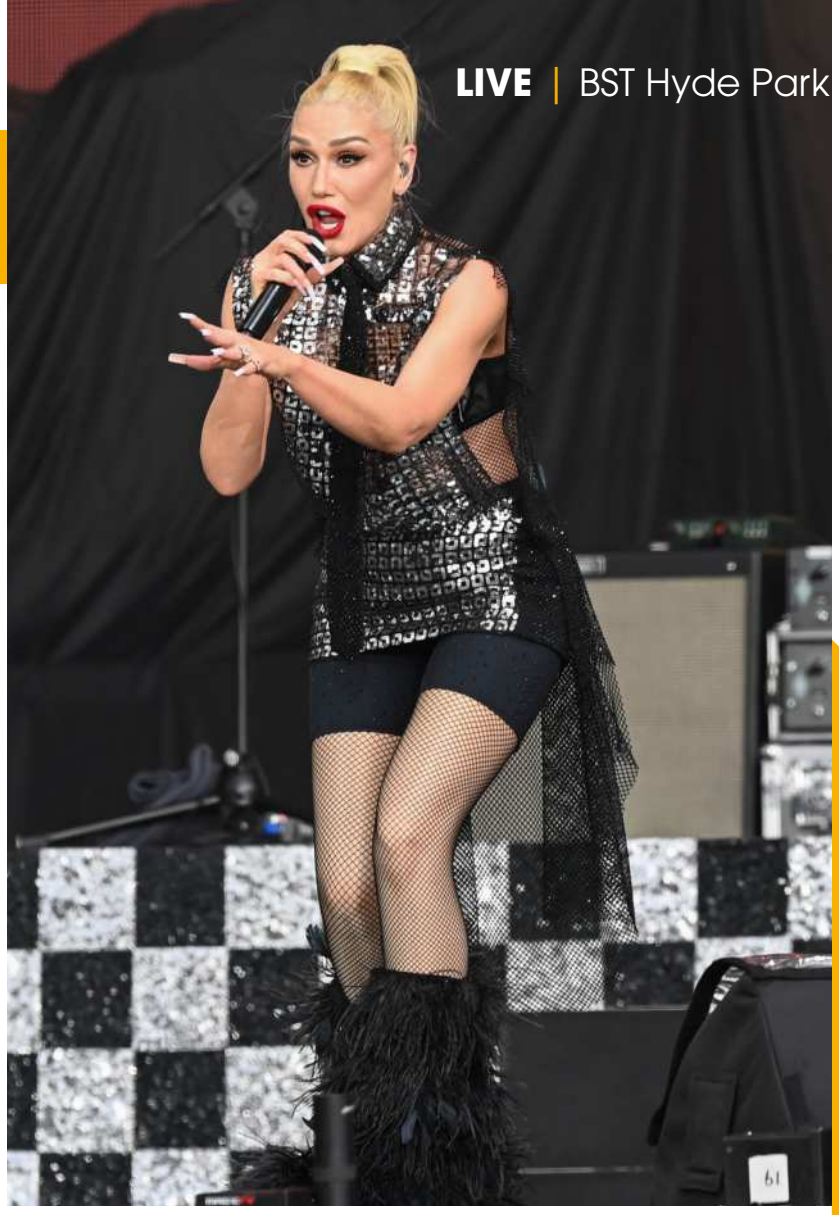
Meanwhile, comeback single *Patience* and more recent cuts from their 21st century repertoire, including Owen's showman number *Shine* (complete with white top hat), Barlow's personal-favourite *Said It All* and the energetic *Hold Up A Light* were equally crowd-pleasing.

Pulling out all the stops, the boys had a couple of top secret surprises in store, with recent collaborator Calum Scott joining the band on *Greatest Day* - the title song from their new jukebox musical, which was recently reworked with Robin Schulz - along with a stunning harmonised rendition of his ballad version of Robyn's *Dancing On My Own*.

Closing out the main set, pop icon Lulu also made an appearance during their classic duet, *Relight My Fire*, joining the group in all-white and drawing the biggest reaction of the night so far.

Returning to the stage one last time with a three-song encore as the sun went down and the stage lit up to 60,000 delighted fans, it was their soundtrack single *Rule The World* that had every phone torch in the venue alight and waving in the air, amid an uplifting display of unity from the crowd.

PHOTOS DAVE HOGAN / HOGAN MEDIA



GWEN STEFANI
SUNDAY, JUNE 25, 2023
★★★★☆

Sixteen years since her last UK shows, Gwen Stefani returned with a triumphant, career-spanning set for the third and final date in a trio of live shows.

Marching onto the stage to the jubilant backing of her 2007 classic *The Sweet Escape*, it was like she'd never been away, with her unparalleled energy levels and youthful visage appearing straight out of the '90s.

As were a run of hits from her time with No Doubt, including the ska staple *Sunday Morning* and punk-influenced *Spiderwebs,* along with a trio of early-noughties gems from 2001's 'Rock Steady': *Hey Baby*, *Hella Good* and *Underneath It All*.

But it was her solo hits that really livened up the crowd, as Gwen led a singalong to her classic ballad *Cool* and had the 70,000-strong audience chanting along to *Rich Girl* and *What You Waiting For*.

A troupe of dancers backed the hitmaker throughout most of the set, while she appeared solo for *Don't Speak* - on which every word was sung back to her.

New single *True Babe* was another highlight; released two days earlier, the inclusion of new music is usually the moment in the show that loses the crowd, but by the end of the track she had everyone jumping up and down, yelling back its infectious chorus.

Packing in 16 songs in just over an hour, Gwen Stefani's UK comeback was nothing short of stellar!

BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN
THURSDAY, JULY 6, 2023
★★★★★

Holding a crowd for 90 minutes is challenging enough for some artists, but for Bruce Springsteen it's (quite literally) a stroll in the park – as he proved with a storming three-hour set in London on Thursday night.

"Hello, London!" Springsteen announced, before driving into a run of decades-spanning tracks, with classics like *Prove It All Night*, *Out In The Street* and *My Hometown* interspersed with more recent cuts such as *Ghosts*, *Wrecking Ball* and *Letter To You*.

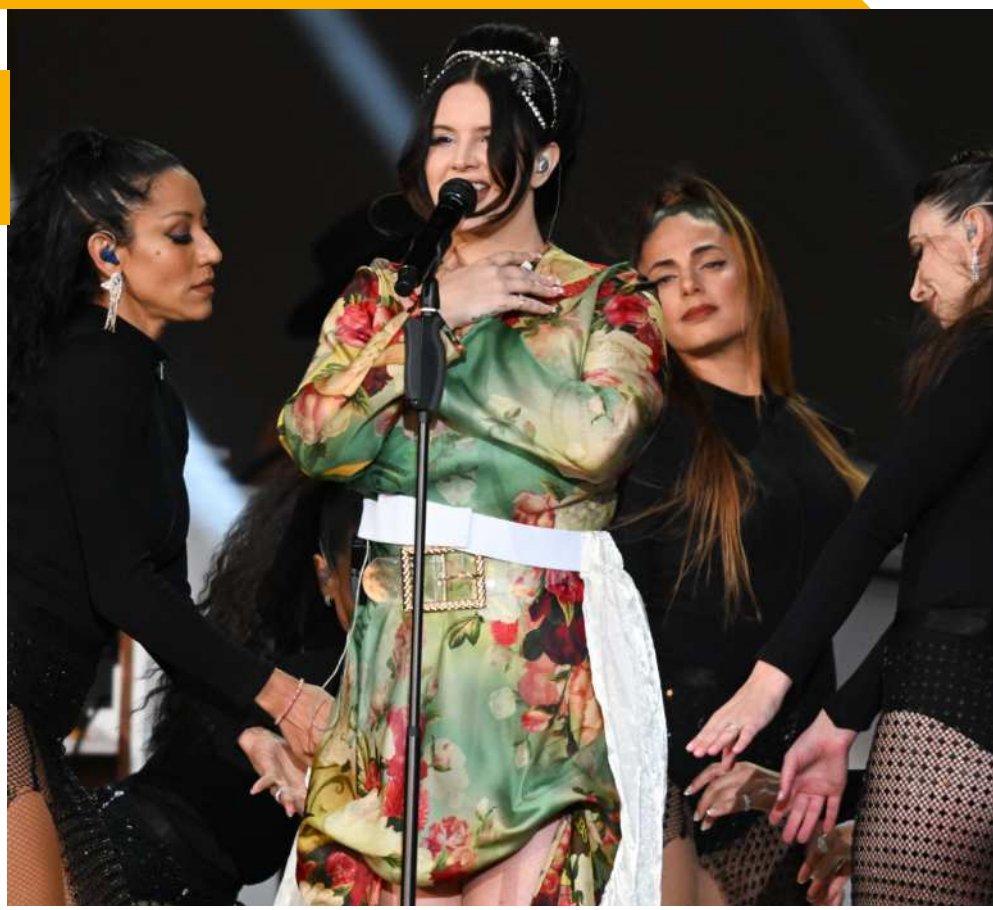
Alongside singles from across eras, concert staples such as *Darlington County* and the lively *Working On The Highway* proved crowd pleasers, with the veteran performer every inch the showman, stepping down to take selfies with the pumped-up crowd and even offering his mouth organ to a young fan close to the barrier.

Two hours in, Springsteen slowed the set down for a heartfelt introduction to *Last Man Standing* and *Backstreets*, which he dedicated to his friend and original bandmate from The Castiles, George Theiss, with whom he played music at just 15 years old.

In rounding out the evening, he ended the main set with *Thunder Road* before going all-out with an epic run of rock classics, launching with the iconic *Born In The U.S.A.* and encompassing *Born To Run*, *Bobby Jean*, *Glory Days*, *Dancing In The Dark* and *Tenth Avenue Freeze-Out*, with the raucous crowd dancing and singing along to every word.

Returning for a second and final encore, it was an acoustic rendition of the haunting *I'll See You In My Dreams* that brought the evening to a close.

LANA DEL RAY
SUNDAY, JULY 9, 2023
★★★★☆



Over the past decade, Lana Del Rey has amassed a lofty catalogue of hits, but in stepping out on to the stage at London's Hyde Park it was recent track *A&W* that marked her entrance, with the star adorned in a green floral gown and flanked by a troupe of all-female dancers.

"God damn, this is a big crowd," she smiled during the opening moments of the set, before slipping into a long, flowing white train for her 2012 'Great Gatsby' soundtrack single, *Young & Beautiful*, for the first of many singalong moments of the evening.

Clocking in at a total 19 songs, the setlist was littered with classics such as *Blue Jeans*, *Ride* and *Summertime Sadness*, along with recent singles *Chemtrails Over The Country Club* (featuring pointed new lyrics directed at an ex), *Arcadia* and *The Grants*.

But it was the deep cuts, including *Pretty When You Cry*, *Norman Fucking Rockwell* and *Cherry* that not only proved the unwavering quality of Del Rey's material alongside her best-known singles, but the staunch commitment of a fanbase that sang the loudest to the hand-selected album cuts.

Perched upon a giant rope swing adorned in flowers and vines, Lana launched herself over the edge of the stage and above the crowd for a soaring rendition of her breakout hit, *Video Games*, with the 60,000-strong audience doubling as a choir for one of the defining anthems of the 2010s.

Steeped in hits from across the eras and visually stunning, with the screens drawing on footage dating back to her Tumblr years, the superstar delivered a celebration of her career to date, and in returning to the city she called "a second home for a very long time", she seemed perfectly at ease by the end of the set as she announced with a twinkle in her eye: "It's only up from here!"

SUGABABES
SATURDAY, JULY 1, 2023
★★★★☆

Sporting coordinated khaki outfits and flanked only by some funky lighting, Keisha Buchanan, Mutya Buena and Siobhan Donaghy let their vocals do the talking as they launched into the electrifying Gary Numan-sampling *Freak Like Me*.

What followed was a career-spanning precis, touching on mega hits like *Round Round*, *Hole In The Head* and *Push The Button*, while showcasing the vocal blend that landed them a record deal when they were still at high school.

Cramming 10 songs into their relatively short set, including an edgy reworking of the Xenomania-produced *Red Dress* and the Diane Warren-penned ballad, *Too Lost In You*, the trio covered all aspects of the Sugababes brand.

A cover of Sweet Female Attitude's garage classic, *Flowers*, led into the final portion, which culminated with *About You Now*.

From the sound to touches of choreography and their natural charm that helped their climb to the top the first time around, the group's comeback has been nothing short of a triumph and it's not a stretch to say Sugababes may be the best live vocal girl group the UK has ever produced.

PHOTOS DAVE HOGAN / HOGAN MEDIA

PINK
SUNDAY, JUNE 25, 2023
★★★★★

Known for her daredevil stunts and awe-inspiring acrobatics, the stage was set for P!nk with four gigantic cranes suspending zip wires high above the crowd, as she dived headfirst into the 24-song set on bungee ropes, somersaulting while singing her 2001 hit, *Get the Party Started*.

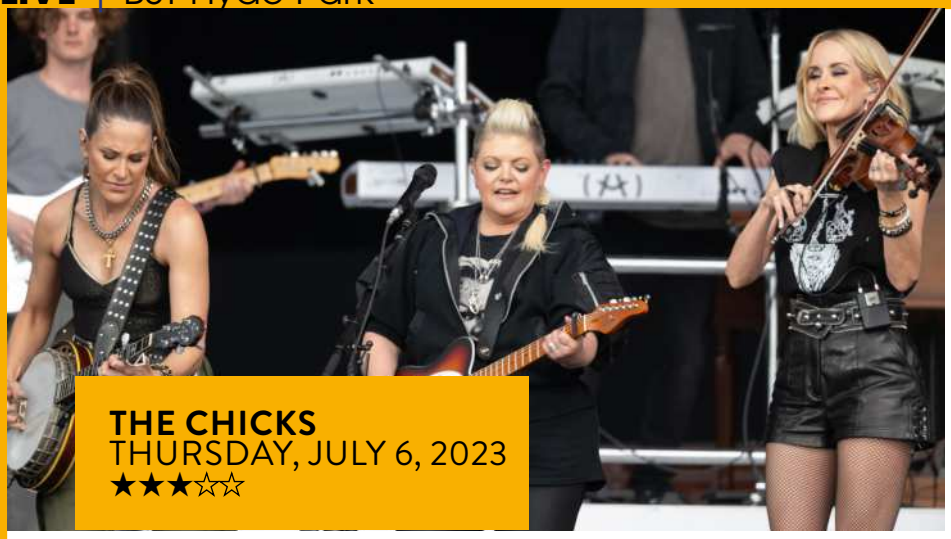
It's not all tricks, though, as the hitmaker landed with her feet on the ground and delivered a run of killer singles including *Raise Your Glass*, *Who Knew* and *Just Like A Pill* to the delight of the pumped-up crowd, setting the tone for a show that touched base on various eras from across her career.

From interpolations of Eurythmics' *Sweet Dreams (Are Made of This)* and Pat Benatar's *Heartbreaker*, to covers of Bob Dylan's *Make You Feel My Love* and Sade's *No Ordinary Love*, P!nk offered an insight into her own record collection and, sequenced alongside her own classics like *Fucking Perfect* and *Just Give Me A Reason*, showcased the strength of her catalogue.

Silence fell as she delivered impassioned renditions of 'Funhouse' (2008) single *Please Don't Leave Me* and recent track *When I Get There*, while *Cover Me In Sunshine* with her daughter, Willow Sage, was a sweet touch that offered a glimpse into the superstar's life behind the glitter and sequins.

With such an elaborate production it's impossible to understate the precision of the operation, with an aerial performance of recent mid tempo *Turbulence* almost axed due to safety concerns, but she made light of the situation and eventually delivered another standout sequence.

Come an incredible finale that saw P!nk suspended above Hyde Park and soaring over the heads of 70,000 fans, it was impossible to not leave the superstar's latest show with the biggest smile and an overwhelming sense of adrenaline and euphoria, having witnessed the performer of our generation at the top of her game.



THE CHICKS
THURSDAY, JULY 6, 2023
★★★☆☆

With 13 Grammys to their name and 28 million album sales in the US alone, The Chicks are the biggest-selling female band of all time in the States, but their ties to London are infamous.

Twenty years after Natalie Maines, Emily Strayer and Martie Maguire became the first victims of cancel culture after comments about the Iraq War, they stepped out to the classic *Sin Wagon* and launched into *Gaslighter*, the title song from their most recent LP, for one of a handful of tunes - along with *Julianna Calm Down*, *Sleep At Night* and *March March* - lifted from the scathing record.

Not Ready To Make Nice was expectedly poignant; their bold return to the spotlight in 2006 that went on to be heralded as one of the songs of the decade after they were shunned by much of the country community.

Meanwhile, covers of Fleetwood Mac's *Landslide* (a massive country hit in 2002) and Beyoncé's *Daddy Lessons*, on which The Chicks lent vocals for a remix, proved crowd pleasers - even if the West London audience seemed less on board with the promise of a hootenanny during *White Trash Wedding*!

WILL YOUNG
SATURDAY, JULY 1, 2023
★★★☆☆

More than two decades after he became the original 'Pop Idol', Will Young continued his greatest hits tour with a selection of hits from across the years.

An understated entrance led to a slow build through a cover of Peter Gabriel's *Sledgehammer* and his own 2015 song *Joy*, but it didn't take long for the crowd to warm up and the opening notes of *Light My Fire* were enough to capture attention.

A mash-up of *Your Game* and Donna Summer's *Love To Love You Baby* proved a highlight from the nine-song offering, along with the Richard X-produced *Jealousy*, which came to life on stage.

By the end of the set, arms were in the air for a run of ballads that showcased Will's unmistakeable vocals and left an air of nostalgia flowing through Hyde Park, as he led a singalong to the classic *Leave Right Now* before jumping into his debut single and first No. 1, *Evergreen*.

Perhaps a consequence of the mixed bill or just an afternoon under the glare of the summer sun, at times the crowd lost focus, but ever the showman Will amped up the vocals and by the end of the set reaffirmed his status as a pop great.

FATHER JOHN MISTY
SUNDAY, JULY 9, 2023
★★★★☆

Father John Misty has crossed paths with Lana Del Rey on multiple occasions so it's only fitting that the US singer-songwriter served as the opening act to her closing show at BST Hyde Park.

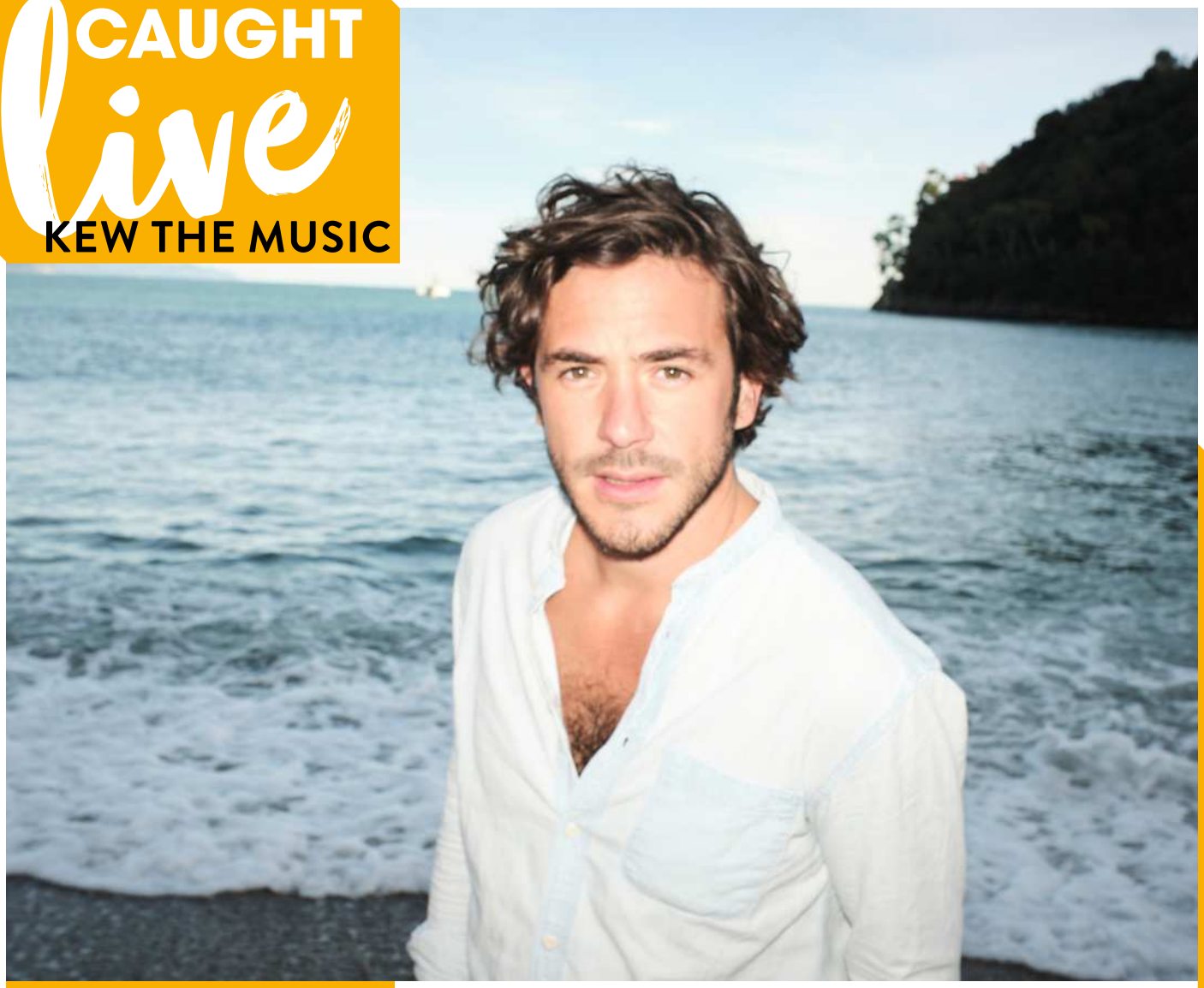
Looking slick in a black suit and white tee as he casually entered the stage with his trademark laid back demeanour to the tune of *The Next 20th Century*. Lifted from his most-recent album, it's one of a number of tracks from the 2022 LP that he delivered alongside selections from his previous four records, pacing the width of the stage and shrouded in shades to block the afternoon sun.

Early favourites *Nancy From Now On* and *When You're Smiling And Astride Me* hold up more than 10 years later, while more up-tempo offerings *Chateau Lobby #4 (in C for Two Virgins)* and *Total Entertainment Forever*, had the crowd dancing along.

Closing with the tender *I Love You Honeybear* before letting loose on the electrifying *The Ideal Husband*, it proved a display of his versatility, with rambling deadpan introductions to several tracks unassumingly charming, all while delivering a mega 14-song, one-hour slot.

PHOTOS DAVE HOGAN / HOGAN MEDIA

CAUGHT live
KEW THE MUSIC



JACK SAVORETTI
THURSDAY, JULY 13, 2023
★★★★☆

Jack Savoretti's climb through the pop ranks has been over a decade in the making, but in the last five years he's gone from strength-to-strength, releasing a pair of chart-topping albums and playing the biggest shows of his career.

Among them, his headline spot at Kew Gardens was a night to remember for for the musician and the hordes of fans that flooded the West London site for a set that spanned the past 15 years, launching with the lively *We Are Bound* before soaring through recent releases *Too Much History*, *Candlelight* and *Greatest Mistake*.

Those songs are lifted from 2019's 'Singing To Strangers' and the 2021 release 'Europiana' and Jack - who was accompanied by his superb live band and The Wandering Hearts on backing vocals - alternated between water and a glass of vino while checking off radio hits like *Who's Hurting Who* and *Secret Life* and *Dancing Through The Rain*.

It wasn't long before he stepped back even further in time for the title song from his breakthrough album, 'Written In Scars' (2015), and *Knock Knock* from the earlier 'Before The Storm' (2012), both showcasing the guitar-led style for which he was best known on his earliest records.

While not among his better-known hits, trademark husky vocals and a strong showing on acoustic guitar had the crowd lapping up every beat - with some no doubt rushing home to dive into his back catalogue.

But in a testament to his growth and versatility, Jack segued between genres with ease, from the gut-wrenching raw ballad *The Way You Said Goodbye*, to the bouncy pop of *When We Were Lovers* and the soul of *You Don't Have To Say You Love Me*, which he started as its Italian original, *Io Che Non Vivo Senza Te*, all demonstrating his range.

Rounding out the night with the aptly-titled *Going Home* in a fitting tribute to a fanbase nurtured over 15 years, he took a moment to thank the crowd for supporting live music in the wake of the pandemic and recognised the hunger for entertainment that's seen the industry bounce back on a global scale.

A decade ago, Jack Savoretti was a guitar singer contemplating walking away from music altogether, so to see him 10 years later delivering a set of his strongest material to a packed-out crowd at one of the city's biggest live music events is a testament to his immense talent and persistence to succeed.

From singles to album cuts, Jack's repertoire comes to life on stage, but most impressive of all is his vocal, delivered effortlessly, which manages to be even more captivating in person than it is on record.

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

THE HUMAN LEAGUE
FRIDAY, JULY 14, 2023
★★★★☆

The joy of British summertime is you never know what the weather has in store, but a rainy Friday afternoon couldn't stop thousands of fans descending upon Kew Gardens for a night of '80s nostalgia, topped off with the mighty Human League!

Through drizzle, Nik Kershaw opened the show with classics like *Wouldn't It Be Good*, *I Won't Let The Sun Go Down On Me* - noting the blatant irony throughout - and the songwriter's version of *The One And Only*, before Altered Images took to the stage with a lively Clare Grogan shimmying through hits from across the decades, from *Happy Birthday* and *Don't Talk To Me About Love* to the title song from their latest LP, 'Mascara Streakz'.

But it was the synth-pop trio - Philip Oakey, Joanne Catherall and Susan Ann Sulley - who were the main attraction, entering to 'Dare' (1981) track *The Sound of the Crowd* and touching on tunes from across the eras.

The ladies' backing vocals shone through on *Mirror Man* as Oakey bounced around the stage, while *The Lebanon* from 1984's 'Hysteria' had the crowd chanting along. The Yellow Magic Orchestra collaboration *Behind The Mask* proved another pleaser all round.

Arriving on stage, Oakey sported a long cream coat and trousers with a loose shirt, while Catherall and Sulley appeared on either side of the stage in juxtaposing black looks, both dancing and delivering strong vocals throughout the 90-minute set.

Sulley took centre stage for her 1995 classic, *One Man In My Heart*, offering a rarely-seen side to The Human League, before a run of classic anthems, including *Love Action (I Believe In Love)*, *Tell Me When* and *(Keep Feeling) Fascination* signalled the end of the main set - but not before the trio launched into their biggest hit, *Don't You Want Me*.

An iconic single from their seminal 'Dare' record, the duet between Oakey and Sulley was the perfect singalong moment, as their voices faded into the background, overpowered by the sheer force and passion of the sea of fans.

After bidding farewell, it wasn't long before the group - who had by this point accumulated several costume changes - returned to the stage once more, this time with their debut single, the classic *Being Boiled*, which this year celebrates its 45th anniversary, and later rounding out the night with the shimmering Giorgio Moroder production of *Together In Electric Dreams*.

As the night came to a close, the buzz in the park was electric as one of the greatest bands to come out of the past half-century delivered a masterclass in synth-pop with live vocals among the best of their career and an energy that proved infectious.

So good they were, in fact, that we didn't even notice the rain had stopped!

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

SOPHIE ELLIS-BEXTOR - HANA ALBUM LAUNCH LAFAYETTE LONDON
FRIDAY, JUNE 30, 2023
★★★★★

Twenty-five years after breaking into the UK charts as lead singer with the audience, Sophie Ellis-Bextor returned to the Top 10 earlier this year with her seventh solo album, 'HANA'.

Inspired by a family trip to Tokyo, Japan in February 2020 and completed with collaborator Ed Hardcourt - with whom she worked on previous LPs 'Wanderlust' (2014) and 'Familia' (2016) - the LP conjures a dreamworld of wonder and emotions, which was brought to life as the pop icon graced the stage at London's Lafayette for an intimate launch show.

Opening with the wistful *A Thousand Orchids* - the first song on the record - backed by a stellar band including Ed and her husband, The Feeling's Richard Jones, she segued into lead track *Breaking The Circle* and delivered singalong renditions of the singles *Everything Is Sweet* and *Lost In The Sunshine*.

Playing the album in full and largely in sequence, Sophie sprinkled nuggets of storytelling between tracks, from poignant reflections on the passing of her stepdad while introducing *Until The Wheels Fall Off* and the realisation of ageing on *Reflections*, to humorous anecdotes about the otherworldly inspiration behind closing number *We've Been Watching You*.

Tapping into the uptempo beats of *Beyond The Universe* and *He's A Dreamer*, along with the theatricality of the stellar *Hearing In Colour* - a highlight of the new material when brought to life on stage - Sophie let loose and worked the stage with her signature shimmy, adorned in a stunning pink floral dress for the bulk of the set.

Behind her on the stage was the neon Kanji for 'HANA'; an important element of the design of the record, she explained, as the word, which translates as 'blossom', can also mean 'nose' - a mistake she was keen to avoid.

Closing out the main set with the final track on the LP, Sophie changed into a playful yellow look for a whistle-stop tour of her biggest hits and fan favourites, opening with recent single *Hypnotized* and touching on *Heartbreak (Make Me A Dancer)*, *Crying At The Discotheque* and, of course, *Murder On The Dancefloor*.

In the biggest surprise of the night, she also dug out her Top 10 2003 hit *I Won't Change You*; a track for which she's made no secret of her disliking but, after playing it for the first time in "about 20 years", admitted she's "warming to it".

At the end of the night, Sophie headed to the balcony of the venue for a stripped-back serenade of the acoustic *Tokyo*, bringing the focus of the show back to her latest collection and proving her an unstoppable performer who can transition between synth-pop, dance, rock and ballads with ease, and reaffirming her status as a true pop icon. **RP**

PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

RELEASE RADAR

Coming soon...

NEW MUSIC

ANDY TAYLOR
MAN'S A WOLF TO MAN

RELEASED: **September 8 BMG**
FORMATS: **CD, Limited Edition White Vinyl**
The first solo release from the former Duran Duran star in 30 years, including the single of the same name.

RÓISÍN MURPHY
HIT PARADE

RELEASED: **September 8 *Ninja Tune***
FORMATS: **CD, 2CD (Rough Trade Exclusive), 2LP Black Vinyl, Limited Edition 2LP Purple Marble Vinyl, Limited Edition 2LP Orange Marble Vinyl (Rough Trade Exclusive) Limited Edition 2LP Pink Vinyl (Amoeba Exclusive)**
Featuring the singles *CooCool* and *The Universe*, the new album from Róisín is a collaboration with DJ Koze.

CORINNE BAILEY RAE
BLACK RAINBOW

RELEASED: **September 15 *Thirty Tigers***
FORMATS: **CD, 2LP Grey Marble Vinyl**
The latest project from the singer-songwriter explores Black femininity, Spell Work, Inner Space/Outer Space, time collapse and ancestors, the erasure Black childhood and music as a vessel for transcendence.

MAE MULLER
SORRY I'M LATE

RELEASED: **September 15 *Capitol***
FORMATS: **CD, Standard Red Vinyl, Limited Edition Clear Vinyl, 3x Individual Cover Cassettes**
The debut album from the United Kingdom's 2023 Eurovision star, featuring her hit entry *I Wrote A Song*.

THE PRETENDERS
RELENTLESS

RELEASED: **September 15 *Parlophone***
FORMATS: **CD, Pink Vinyl**
The 12th album from Chrissie Hynde and co features the single *Let The Sun Come In*.

ANASTACIA
OUR SONGS

RELEASED: **September 22 *Edel***
FORMATS: **CD, CD (Fan Box Edition), 2LP Black Vinyl, Limited Edition 2LP White Vinyl, Limited Edition 2LP Black and White Splatter Vinyl (Amazon Exclusive)**
A collection of German pop classics is the latest LP from US vocal powerhouse Anastacia.

KYLIE MINOGUE
TENSION

RELEASED: **September 22 *BMG***
FORMATS: **CD, Alternate Artwork CD, Deluxe CD, Alternate Artwork Deluxe CD (Artist Store Exclusive), Standard Black Vinyl, Limited Edition Silver Vinyl (Artist Store Exclusive), Limited Edition Transparent Orange Vinyl (Retail Exclusive), Limited Edition Pink Vinyl (Amazon Exclusive), Limited Edition Green Vinyl (HMV Exclusive)**
The long-awaited follow-up to 2020's 'DISCO' includes the singles *Padam Padam* and *10 out of 10* with Oliver Heldens.

BEVERLEY KNIGHT
THE FIFTH CHAPTER

RELEASED: **September 29 *BMG***
FORMATS: **CD, Translucent Orange Vinyl**
Celebrating her 50th birthday year, the Queen of British Soul unveils her first studio album in seven years.

ALEXIS STRUM
COCOON

RELEASED: **October 6 *Double J***
FORMATS: **CD, Limited Edition White Vinyl, Limited Edition Purple Vinyl**
The lost debut album from the singer-songwriter finally sees the light of day!

RICK ASTLEY
ARE WE THERE YET?

RELEASED: **October 6 *BMG***
FORMATS: **CD, Deluxe CD, Alternate Artwork CD (HMV Exclusive), Clear Vinyl, Picture Disc Vinyl, Pink Cassette**
The eighties icon returns with his first album in five years, self-penned and -produced in his southwest London garage.

TROYE SIVAN
SOMETHING TO GIVE EACH OTHER

RELEASED: **October 13 *EMI Australia***
FORMATS: **CD, Deluxe CD, Standard Black Vinyl, Limited Edition Clear Vinyl (Artist Store Exclusive), Limited Edition Orange Vinyl (Spotify Exclusive),Cassette**
The third album from the Aussie star heads in a bold new direction with lead single *Rush*.

V V BROWN
AM I BRITISH YET?

RELEASED: **October 27 *YOY***
FORMATS: **CD, 2LP Black Vinyl, Limited Edition 2LP Red Vinyl, Cassette**
A bold statement from the singer-songwriter who returns with her first studio album in eight years!

LOOKING BACK

PRINCE
BATMAN and GRAFFITI BRIDGE

RELEASED: **September 8** ***Warner***

FORMATS: **2CD, 2LP Green Vinyl, Limited Edition Picture Disc**

The classic soundtrack and 12th studio album from the late superstar are the latest to be reissued on wax.

SHEENA EASTON
MADNESS, MONEY AND MUSIC

RELEASED: **September 22** ***Cherry Pop***

FORMATS: **CD+DVD, Limited Edition Green Vinyl**

The reissue of her classic 1982 fan-favourite album, featuring her original version of *Wind Beneath My Wings*.

CICERO
FUTURE BOY

RELEASED: **September 29** ***SFE***

FORMATS: **Limited Edition White Vinyl + DVD**

Returning to vinyl for the first time since its hard-to-find original pressing, the classic LP is reissued with a bonus DVD or promo clips and performances.

DISCO DISCHARGE PRESENTS BOX OF SIN

RELEASED: **September 29** ***Demon***

FORMATS: **5CD**

Influenced by '80s gay nightlife, 'Box Of Sin' tells the story of that decade based on the actual club charts at the time.

HAIM
DAYS ARE GONE

RELEASED: **September 29** ***Polydor***

FORMATS:

The debut album from the sister-trio celebrates its 10th anniversary with an expanded reissue featuring unreleased material.

THE BRAND NEW HEAVIES
NEVER STOP: THE BEST OF...

RELEASED: **September 29** ***London***

FORMATS: **2CD, 2LP Black Vinyl**

The acid jazz and funk group's discography is revisited for a career-spanning best-of LP, featuring all of their biggest hits.

TOYAH
THE CHANGELING

RELEASED: **September 29** ***Cherry Red***

FORMATS: **2CD+DVD, Limited Edition Neon Pink Vinyl, 3CD+DVD+2LP Box Set**

The seminal 1982 album is revisited for an expanded set that dives deep like never before.

HOLLLY JOHNSON
BLAST

RELEASED: **September 29** ***Pleasure Dome***

FORMATS: **Limited Edition Red Vinyl, Limited Edition Cassette**

Ahead of his autumn shows, the Frankie Goes To Hollywood star's debut solo LP is revisited.

KATY PERRY
KATY CATALOG

RELEASED: **October 20** ***Capitol***

FORMATS: **5LP Coloured Vinyl**

Featuring her classic albums 'One Of The Boys' (2008), 'Teenage Dream' (2010) and 'Prism' (2013), the pop superstar marks a number of milestones with this stunning box set.

U2
ZOOROPA

RELEASED: **October 27** ***Island***

FORMATS: **2LP Gold Vinyl**

Thirtieth anniversary reissue of the group's classic LP to coincide with the band's performances at the Sphere in Las Vegas.

TLC
CRAZYSEXYCOOL and FANMAIL

RELEASED: **Mid-December** ***VMP***

FORMATS: **2LP Swirl (Red and White, Blue and White) + Bonus 7"**

The iconic second and third albums from the US R&B trio receive a second limited reissue with a limited edition 7" single.

For all the latest RETROPOP releases visit RETROPOP MAGAZINE.COM

SUMMER OF LOVE

As **Steps** prepare for their only UK show of 2023 at Brighton Pride, how well do you know the Fab Five?

1 What is the title of Steps' debut single?

2 Can you name the original Steps line-up?

3 Who wrote and originally recorded Steps' hit single *Tragedy*?

4 Which songwriting duo is responsible for many of Steps' biggest hits?

5 In which year did Steps release their first greatest hits album?

6 Following their split, which Steps star went Top 10 with her solo single *Lately*?

7 Which song marked Steps' comeback in 2017 after a break of several years?

8 Which Steps album was released in celebration of their 20th anniversary?

9 True or False: Steps participated in the Eurovision Song Contest.

10 Who originally recorded Steps' first Top 10 hit *Last Thing On My Mind*?

11 After Steps split, H&Claire returned to the Top 3 of the UK charts with which single?

12 Which double A-side became Steps' first No.1 hit in the UK?

13 Who co-wrote the title song to Steps' 2020 album 'What The Future Holds?

14 Comparing them to Sweden's biggest pop export, how did Pete Waterman famously refer to Steps?

15 Which '90s pop star wrote Steps' 2022 single *A Hundred Years Of Winter*?

16 Before it became a massive hit for Steps, who recorded *Deeper Shade of Blue*?

17 True or False: Steps have had more than 10 Top 10 singles in the UK.

18 With whom did Steps appear on the all-star single *Thank ABBA for the Music*?

19 What is the title of Steps' most recent studio album?

20 Steps returned to the top of the charts last year with their 'Platinum Collection'. Name its lead single.

ANSWERS: **1** *5, 6, 7, 8,* **2** Ian 'H' Watkins, Lisa Scott-Lee, Derek O'Brien, Maddy Chan, and Mitch Stevens; **3** Bee Gees; **4** Topham & Twigg; **5** 2001; **6** Lisa Scott-Lee; **7** *Scared Of The Dark*; **8** 'Tears On The Dancefloor'; **9** False; **10** Bananarama; **11** DJ; **12** *Tragedy / Heartbeat*; **13** Sia; **14** "ABBA on speed"; **15** Darren Hayes; **16** Tina Cousins; **17** True; **18** Billie, B*Witched, Cleopatra and Tina Cousins; **19** 'What the Future Holds Pt. 2'; **20** *Hard 2 Forget*

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

NOW
THAT'S WHAT I CALL MUSIC!
105
CALVIN HARRIS, ELLIE GOULDING • LEWIS CAPALDI • MILEY CYRUS • ED SHEERAN • KYLIE MINOGUE • LOREEN
JAZZY • DAVID GUETTA & ANNE-MARIE & COI LERAY • ONEREPUBLIC • FIFTY FIFTY • LEIGH-ANNE • NIALL HORAN
POST MALONE • LANA DEL REY • THE 1975 • P!NK • TOM GRENNAN • JONAS BROTHERS • FLO & MISSY ELLIOTT
BECKY HILL, LEWIS THOMPSON • RUDIMENTAL X CHARLOTTE PLANK X VIBE CHEMISTRY • OLIVIA DEAN
ZARA LARSSON • CAT BURNS • SAM RYDER FEAT. BRIAN MAY • TINA TURNER
28.07.23

DEPECHE MODE

Memento Mori

WORLD TOUR 2024